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Translated from the French
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MADAME DE POMPADOUR

BY

J. B. H. R. CAPEFIGUE

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

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MADAME LA MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR

I

LOUIS XV. AFTER FONTENOY. THE FÊTES OF THE HÔTEL DE VILLE

(1740-1745)

THE campaign in the Netherlands, crowned as it was by the battle of Fontenoy, was a brilliant episode in the reign of Louis XV. The King, then forty years of age, had, at the head of his army, covered himself with glory, and in the face of the deadly fire of the English column had at all times displayed a courage worthy of a king and a general. Surrounded by his devoted followers, and still in the full prime of his youth and strength, he had tasted

of the life of the camp; he had taken his part in a battle and assisted at a siege with the same gaiety, the same elegance of manner, that he displayed at his little suppers at Versailles, or at beautiful Marly, or at Choisy, that charming retreat on the banks of the Seine, so deservedly famous for its flowers, where the great Mademoiselle spent the later years of her troubled life.

I look upon the reign of Louis XV. as the reflection of the spirit of chivalry, the last glow of its flame before it flickered and went out, extinguished altogether beneath the *cornette blanche*, which was by then already fast becoming old-fashioned.

Under Louis XV. the nobles were brave, chivalrous, and charming, as indeed they are represented to us in pastels of Latour, or on the canvas of Boucher, or in Parrocel's battle scenes: we see the King, surrounded by his men clad in gay and attractive uniforms of various colours, white, blue, and yellow,

with his hat tilted rakishly over his ear, his coat gaily trimmed with white braid, himself encouraging sprightly gossip and lively tales of gallantry: we see a nobleman facing the guns in ruffles and powdered hair, and perfumed point-lace handkerchief. Elegance has never been a hindrance to courage, while at all times has politeness been the noble ally of bravery.

Louis XV. was a king rich in the number of his friends, a man capable of inspiring the tenderest affection. To an extremely handsome face, which preserved its beauty at all periods of his life, were added a dignity, a nobility, a smile at once gracious, melancholy, and ironical, and an undisguised contempt for all philosophy, and for those doctrine-mongers whose boast it is that they will destroy the beliefs of society. Of his soldiers he was very fond, as well as of the generals who led them to battle: Richelieu, Soubise, Grammont, d'Ayen, and Chauvelin, the friend of

his childhood. The King was so good a horseman that he appeared to even greater advantage on horseback than Marshal Saxe, about whose position as the best rider in the army there were no two opinions.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Louis could number more true and loyal friends than he could mere courtiers. He treated the gentlemen of his Court with a gracious politeness that did honour to himself while it ennobled them. Women worshipped him, as much for his beautiful face as for his gallantry and his wit. One of his chief characteristics — and here I am referring to the principal defect in his character — was a too evident display of his great weariness of life; he was a prey to ennui, and showed it in every feature of his face. Louis XV. suffered from that most terrible of all punishments, which is inflicted upon mankind by satiety, the withering and atrophy of heart and soul; he was

experiencing the emptiness and impotency that over-indulgence leaves in its wake. And, further, he had been the witness of so much that was vile, and observed the predominance of so many false ideas, that he had developed an indifference to all that was good and noble. The King had but little belief in human honesty, because it had seldom been his lot to meet with it; he liked honest men, and yet he did not dare to favour them or even make use of them. Although of an upright and sincere character, he did not adopt a determined policy until towards the end of his life, when Parliament was rushing on blindly towards revolution.

One of the most important results of the glorious campaign of the Netherlands against England and Austria was the marriage of the Dauphin with the Infanta of Spain. Louis-Auguste, Dauphin of France, was quite a young man when he followed his father in the campaign of 1745. Riding by the

side of his father, he had been present at battle and siege, and had always displayed high courage and considerable good sense, both of which bore witness to his excellent training, and were evidence of a noble disposition, which, indeed, the greedy hand of intrigue had more than once endeavoured to exploit for its own purposes.

Louis gave orders that the betrothal should be celebrated with great solemnity. He desired that the Court might be entertained by it and his own thoughts diverted from the gloomy channels in which they had flowed since the recent death of the Duchesse de Châteauroux, his most tender and devoted friend—an event that had deeply affected him. It was from the illustrious family of Nesle that the King had, up to now, chosen his most intimate friends: Madame de Mailly, Madame de Flavencourt, and the Comtesse de Tournelle (who became later the Duchesse de Châteauroux)—

mistresses who were as different from one another as three women could be. Louis XV. had at first followed the traditions of Louis XIV. and selected his mistresses from the families of the highest nobility. The family of Nesle was of the same rank as that of Mortemart, and even more noble than that of Aubigné-Maintenon. Upon the head of the unfortunate Duchesse de Châteauroux, beautiful, courageous and adorable though she was, had fallen a positive deluge of insult and intrigue at the time of the King's illness at Metz. She was driven without ceremony from the Court, and would have found herself without a friend in the world had it not been for the Duc de Richelieu, who protected her from the insults that were heaped upon her, and took her away in his own coach. She was restored to favour, but, at the moment of her return to Court, she was suddenly overtaken by death. Madame de Châteauroux, beautifully adorned as for a triumph,

in the midst of the gay throng at the Court, was suddenly struck down by an unknown and sinister disease, which, in the course of a few days, proved fatal. The King was deeply affected by her death, for he had been passionately devoted to her, and used to speak of her proudly as the sparkling jewel of his crown.

There were many tales connected with the death of the Duchesse de Châteauroux. Some even went so far as to speak of poison put into her cup at supper; as if a more deadly, though a more subtle, poison was not to be found in the overwhelming shock she must have suffered at so speedy a transition from happiness to grief, from sadness to joy: the heart and the imagination are ever life's greatest enemies, killing far more surely than disease. Madame de Châteauroux died on the 8th of December 1744, at her hôtel in the Rue du Bac. As I have already said, the King bitterly mourned her loss.

M. d'Argenson wrote to the Duc de Richelieu: 'Our poor master's miserable countenance makes us tremble for his life.' The King was gradually growing accustomed to the idea of death, which was cutting off one after the other of his friends. In time he came to look upon the image of death with the firmness of a stoic, with the result that men judged him unfeeling and profoundly selfish.

It was with the idea of creating a diversion from this grief, that the court entered hilariously into the preparations for the marriage of the Dauphin and the Infanta of Spain. There were magnificent displays at Versailles, at the castle itself, in the gardens, and on the canal and the lake; hunting parties were arranged at Compiègne and Fontainebleau; there were grand fireworks and illuminations, and fishing by torchlight. It is difficult for us to form a correct idea of what Versailles was like at

this period. Children of a terrible and bloody revolution as we are, it is only given to us to see those splendid galleries crowded with a throng of coarsely clad men and women, whose metalled shoes ring on the rich flooring, reminding us of nothing so much as a muddy torrent pouring down on a beautiful bed of roses. The Versailles of to-day is like the old and noble figure of a marquis trampled under foot by the crowd; it is the Memphis of the old régime, and to our generation the manners of a gentleman are more foreign than the habits of the Ancient Romans after the fall of the Empire. Under Louis XV. the fêtes and ceremonies were of regal splendour and magnificence: his great nobles had the grand manner of living, of serving and of loving their King and their country. The velvet of their coats harmonised well with the tapestries and Venetian glass; their lace went marvellously well with the beautiful Sèvres china

and the vases of agate with their lovely ornamentation of topaz and of emerald.

The Infanta shone amidst the splendour in the eyes of all, and especially in the eyes of the Dauphin, her husband, who was very much attached to his wife; it would be impossible to picture a truer or a more ardent love than that of Louis-Auguste for the Infanta: she was not beautiful, but she enjoyed the privilege, peculiar to the daughters of Spain, of arousing passions as burning as the sun that lights up their land. She died in giving birth to a princess, and her loss was bitterly mourned. The Dauphin was, for the time, inconsolable.

The city of Paris, which at that time was associated with every joy and every grief of the royal family, wished to celebrate the marriage in a manner worthy of the occasion. The festivities were arranged on a very lavish scale. The mayor, acting on the advice of his aldermen, caused twelve

beautiful green arbours to be constructed, in the very heart of the city, after the fashion of those erected at fêtes given by Charles VII. It was midwinter and the cold was severe; driving rain beat against the trees, which bent under the gusts of wind; and yet these arbours were so warm, so ingeniously sheltered from the inclemency without, that among the flowers and bushes there was a suggestion of a mild and gentle springtime. The celebration of municipal fêtes is somewhat of a lost art, with its traditions of the bourgeoisie and their guilds—the aristocracy of labour. The art of leisure has given place to industrialism, enterprise, and machinery; the page of heraldry and chivalry is effaced from the book of the artist and the mechanic, as well as of the knight; and hurry and disorder have taken the place of elegance and distinction. The most brilliant of the fêtes was that given at the Hôtel de

Ville, the palace of the citizens. The worthy aldermen held a meeting to discuss what manner of diversion would be most likely to please the Court, and came to the conclusion that a masked ball would be best calculated to entertain the King. It was decided that the ball should take the form of a great concourse of the nations, and of the deities of mythology, and that the most beautiful of the citizenesses should take up their position upon a platform elegantly but simply draped in velvet and silk and gold hangings, and from there salute their king. The courtiers must assuredly have been lost in admiration for this bevy of pretty faces, of which the good city of Paris was so justly proud, especially as, unlike that of the Court, its beauty was unadorned, being free from rouge or powder or artificial locks of hair.

In the midst of an immense crowd, surrounding the Court with graciousness and smiles, the King singled out a

young woman, barely twenty-one, with fair hair floating over her shoulders, who impersonated the huntress, Diana; she was clad in the costume of a nymph, her quiver on her shoulder, her bow in her hand, and she seemed about to let fly an arrow at the King. Louis, who never lost an opportunity of being gallant, drew near to the beautiful Diana and said to her, in very gracious tones: 'Fair huntress, the darts you shoot are mortal.' After having vouchsafed a witty reply to his sally, the nymph disappeared, and was lost in the eager, thronging crowd, leaving the King in an ecstasy of expectation. He found her after a few seconds, and took up again the threads of a conversation at once enchanting and sparkling, and, as the evening wore on, he recognised in his Diana a young woman who, whenever the royal hunt had gone in the direction of the Forest of Senart, had followed it on horseback or

in an elegant coach fashioned of rock crystal and drawn by two chestnuts. In return for her amiable perseverance, Louis had been in the habit of sending her a souvenir of the hunt, the noble insignia of the slaughtered beasts: the horns of the stag, the head of the boar or the wolf, the tail of the fox, together with a brace of pheasants and some grouse. The Château d'Étioles, where dwelt the fair huntress, was well enough known to the King, but, until now absorbed by Madame de Châteauroux, he had paid little heed to the huntress of the Forest of Senart; while the latter had hitherto been unerringly discreet in her quest after royal favours, for she aimed at winning from him his whole heart, and was determined to be more to his Majesty than the plaything of an idle moment.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

II

THE ORIGIN OF MADAME D'ÉTIOLES

(1745)

THE Château d'Étioles, which was later raised to a marquisate, was originally the property of Jean-Baptiste Lenormand (who adopted the name of Étioles), nephew of the wealthy Lenormand de Turneheim, the most noteworthy and respected of all the *fermiers-généraux*, a distinguished amateur in painting and sculpture, and the friend of artists. De Turneheim and d'Étioles were in the habit of opening their châteaux to poets and wits—to all men of letters, in fact—such as Voltaire, Maupertius, Cahusac, Montesquieu and the charming Abbé de Bernis. All were constant guests at the Château d'Étioles, as well as at the salons of the *fermiers-généraux*, of Helvétius and

M. de la Popelinière, forming a society of men of genius, charming and full of flattery towards their generous patrons, whom, later on, when occasion arose, they did not hesitate to revile.

On the 17th of January, 1739, M. Lenormand d'Étioles had married Mademoiselle Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, the daughter of Antoine Poisson, head clerk in the firm of Pâris Frères, the eminent financiers; he himself became later a purveyor of meat and provisions to the Invalides. His wife, a woman of exceptional ability, herself the daughter of a financier, was at the same time very friendly towards the philosophic party and threw her drawing-room open to men of all ranks and every persuasion. Her daughter, Jeanne-Antoinette, a charming child, had the advantage of a splendid education. Endowed with a lively imagination and a keen intellect, before she was fifteen years of age she could draw and engrave admirably. She also played

with considerable skill upon the lute and the bass-viol, an instrument which was at that time very fashionable.

Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson was fifteen at the time of her marriage with the *sous-fermier-général* Lenormand, Seigneur d'Étioles, nephew of M. Lenormand de Turneheim. It is universally admitted that Mademoiselle Poisson was extraordinarily beautiful —and very rich. There was nothing unusual about such a marriage, nor unsuitable, for both parties were of financial circles: the daughter of an army contractor, pretty and well-bred, was marrying a farmer of taxes. Voltaire, with his usual love of slander, takes care to tell us that Madame Poisson was the mistress of M. de Turneheim, and that she had speculated in her daughter's charms. Voltaire delighted in these *chroniques scandaleuses*; there was, in his eyes, no sacredness in private life; he lifted one veil after the other in his eagerness to gratify a

generation which was ever far too ready to listen to scandal.

The marriage added to the lustre of the Étioles society and the salon of M. de Turneheim. Of Madame d'Étioles at the age of fifteen there is unfortunately no existing portrait. All her contemporaries speak of her charm and her wit as being out of the common, and record that she attracted round her a small court of her own, a court consisting principally of artists and men of letters, whom she astonished and delighted by the fascination of her voice, her conversation, and her numerous gifts. She was a fearless horsewoman, and it was her custom to ride out into the Forest of Senart, or to drive a phaeton through its glades, whenever the King was drawn thither by the hunt. Clad in a garb that was always noticeable, sometimes even extravagant, she attracted the attention of everybody. Men talked at Choisy of no one more than of the

nymph of the Forest of Senart, who was often to be seen with a falcon perched on her wrist, like a fair lady-of-the-manor of the Middle Ages. Madame d'Étioles was lovèd by her husband, and there was little room for slander in the conduct of her early married life. By M. Lenormand she had one child, a charming little girl, who received the name of Alexandrine. At Étioles the life of the youthful mistress of the castle was divided between the fine arts, animated conversations with men of genius, and attention to the welfare of the little Alexandrine. In accordance with the custom of all the great houses, life at the château occupied eight months of the year; the remaining four were spent at Paris, in the hôtel of M. de Turneheim, in the Rue Croix des Petits Champs.

III

THE RISE OF MADAME DE POMPADOUR

(1745)

To fathom the heart of Louis XV., and unravel the mystery of the adulterous attachments which he formed in the latter part of his reign with women of comparatively low birth, would indeed be a difficult task. What explanation is there to be found for the fact that a king, who was at first so virtuous and wise, so deeply attached to Queen Marie Leczinska that he often declared there was no woman more beautiful, or more beloved, should suddenly cast himself into the arms of creatures who were little better than women of the streets? How was it that the life of a pure man became converted into that of a jaded libertine? It may be that the corrupt society of the Regency reacted upon his

own morals, and completely disordered his mode of life. Or that the Queen Marie herself, with her coldness, her scruples, her aloofness, and her small-pox, was the innocent cause of her abandonment by a king who was a true descendant of Henri IV. in his passion for beautiful women.

The behaviour of Queen Marie Leczinska towards Louis XV. was rather the expression of feelings of duty than of love. The Queen resembled a statue of Juno, fashioned in the marble of the Baltic, or a cold Scandinavian Venus: portraits of her are still to be seen at Versailles, painted at many different periods of her life, but they all show us features of Slav origin, without the least animation, without even the charm of youth. No trace of passion is to be found in her face, which is characterised by a resignation to the decrees of Providence such as weakens the springs of action and paralyses the will.

One remark it is worth while to make, since it is a matter of history: so long as the King sought his dishonourable diversions among the ladies of noble houses the Court never complained, nor, indeed, showed themselves in any way astonished at his conduct. A succession of liaisons, than which nothing could have been more scandalous, arose out of the King's strange love for the four daughters of the illustrious house of Nesle—and yet no one seemed surprised. Men even went so far as to praise the gentleness and piety of Madame de Mailly; the charms—always elegant, if they were somewhat bold—of Madame de Flavencourt, and above all the courage and true French pride of Madame de Châteauroux during the war. All joined in heaping praise upon her head: high-mindedness, heroism, disinterestedness, all were hers. A new Agnes Sorel, she came to lead the King to victory. But, as soon as Louis ceased to choose his

loves from the *haute noblesse*, from among his titled ladies, all was changed. Then he was accused of dissoluteness, of baseness; a *petite bourgeoise* occupied the King's attention, and the *haute noblesse* refused to understand it, or to pardon the offence. In the case of nearly every one of his passions for the ladies de Nesle, its origin could be traced to some Court intrigue, some political ambition, and it may be that the idea that party considerations were governing his heart was becoming irksome to Louis. Liaisons with the nobility had, moreover, very serious consequences. Whenever the King had children by a mistress of noble birth he was almost compelled to recognise them and make them legitimate, and that necessitated the bestowal of dowries and endowments upon them, and the forfeiture of Crown property. It would be difficult to estimate the amount that the Duc de Vendôme, and even the Duc de Beaufort, had cost

Henri IV.; or again, the sums expended by Louis XIV. on his long line of illegitimate legitimates, at the end of which came the Duc de Maine, whose intrigues at the time of the Regency will long be remembered. Bastards, recognised, legitimised and dowered, were a burden, if not a danger, to the monarchy.

Louis XV. had many natural children, all of whom inherited the beautiful features of their father's face. One of them, indeed, the handsome Abbé de Luc, was called *le demi Louis*, so strong was his likeness to the King. Louis made provision for every one of his children, furnishing his daughters with modest but suitable dowries, and marrying them to men of rank. He took care, however, not to raise them to the status of their parents or of princes of his own lineage, thereby showing his respect for the true family spirit.

He was living at Choisy in 1744,

while the army was in winter quarters, and was at that time very much attracted by the charming Diana of the Hôtel de Ville. I need not dwell upon the details of an intrigue that had its origin at a ball—suffice it to say that very soon it became a question of a really serious attachment. At the Château d'Étioles, besides the ordinary guests, such as Voltaire, Helvétius, Montesquieu, Bernis, Fontenelle (who had known Madame d'Étioles as a child), there were constantly to be seen such friends of Louis as the Duc de Richelieu, the Prince de Soubise, and the Comte de Chauvelin. The King was ever the subject of their talk: his daring huntsmanship, the beauty of his features, the perfect grace of his manners. So long as the Duchesse de Châteauroux was alive Madame d'Étioles had no hopes of ever taking her place; having the good sense not to aspire to an inferior or a transitory place in the King's affec-

tions, she flirted gaily, and bided her time. Her assiduity in following the King when hunting in the Forest of Senart was unfailing, and her appearance at the ball of the Hôtel de Ville was as it were the consummation of her ambitions. Madame de Châteauroux had passed away and the post was vacant at Versailles.

It was said that the young Madame d'Étioles was acting on the advice of the Duc de Richelieu, a man who was himself undoubtedly faithful to the Duchesse de Châteauroux until the time of her death. It must in justice be said of the Richelieus that never did a woman of their family aspire to the title—which can hardly be said to be an honourable one—of mistress to the King, and in this they differed from the Noailles and the Mortemarts, who owed so great a part of their prestige, their wealth, and their renown to the favourites. The Duc de Richelieu was the friend and adviser

of the mistresses of Louis XV., but he would never have suffered his wife (a Guise) or his sister or his daughter, who later became Comtesse d'Egmont, to become the favourite even of the King of France. In spite of their apparent levity of character the Richelieus still preserved something of the noble quality of the great Cardinal in all that concerned the purity of their scutcheon.

The triumph of Madame d'Étioles was a more serious matter than it has generally been considered. Louis XV., who had been greatly occupied during his illness at Metz by thoughts of concession, might at any moment have accepted the conditions of the party of the Dauphin, and formed a ministry of his own. After the death of the Duchesse de Châteauroux (a melancholy event at which the King had been profoundly shaken both in heart and in mind) it became necessary to find him a friend who would make

a stand against the somewhat sentimental policy of Monseigneur, and it was with this end in view that the Duc de Richelieu and the King's friends —Soubise, Chauvelin, d'Ayen—turned their attention to Madame d'Étioles. She belonged, by ties of blood and friendship, to that philosophic school which was designed in the true spirit of the eighteenth century. Madame d'Étioles, as the favourite, without the importance of rank which attached to the family of Madame de Châteauroux, would maintain the national honour in all its pride and glory, and at the same time prevent the fulfilment of those measures of excessive kindliness which were embodied in the pacific policy of the Dauphin. United to the party of financiers, like the Marquise de Prie, she would be able to put her hand on loans, effect settlements, and, in fact, cope with the difficult financial situation which, in spite of the many sacrifices that had been made, had re-

sulted from the prolongation of the war. And, finally, she would afford the King pleasures and distractions of a nature hitherto too much neglected by his majesty: the pleasures of the mind, of the fine arts, and of literature. Madame d'Étioles, painter, engraver, musician, would open the King's eyes to the enjoyments of the salon; endowed as she was with all the many varied charms of a brilliant and accomplished talker, she would carry Louis along with her as well by some happy saying as by some well-weighed judgment, for she had wit as well as knowledge of affairs.

According to the *chronique scandaleuse* of the time, the first interview was arranged to take place in the hôtel of Monsieur Lenormand de Turneheim, in the Rue des Petits Champs. But these items of boudoir gossip are of but little importance: the King visited at the house several times, in strictest incognito, and found a particular charm

in the conversation of Madame d'Étioles. As I have already mentioned, there exists no portrait of Madame d'Étioles at this youthful period of her life. The pastel of Latour, and the finished portrait by Boucher, belong to more advanced periods. In all her pictures the Marquise is represented as having very beautiful eyes, a high forehead, a rather prominent nose, and a large mouth; but what neither pastel nor painting could reproduce was her vivaciousness, the charming play of her features, the fascination of her conversation: she could talk on all subjects, and was never at a loss on any. Added to all this was a remarkably clear head, and a faculty of going to the root of things, no matter how complicated; while with highly developed artistic powers were combined keen sensibilities and a genuine regard for the King. She shared in all his triumphs, all his joys, and all his anxieties, and the latter she strove unceasingly to dissipate.

She had a passion for building, for laying out gardens, and making the best of a fine point of view in a landscape, —for creating, in fact, a fairyland such as could only be conceived in the brain of the influential and the rich. She could hunt, she could act, she could draw and paint and discuss art with the artists; she was in fact a second Armida, and her enchantments were all dedicated to the King's pleasure. Their intercourse had up to that time been shrouded in mystery; it was in secrecy that Madame d'Étioles followed the King on that campaign of 1745, which was crowned by the battle of Fontenoy; in the army there was neither publicity nor scandal. Marshal Saxe was, at his own request, followed by Madame Favart, and ladies of the Court attached themselves to various noblemen of high rank. Madame d'Étioles was fearless in her desire to follow the camp and share the labours of the King; and in so doing she displayed

considerable hardihood, devotion, and courage. Clad in the garb of a musketeer, she went under the wing of the Duc de Richelieu, who was pleased to call her his *bagage élégant.* It was at that time no rare thing to see ladies beneath the tents of the knights of the field—a pleasant reminiscence of the Middle Ages.

The rise to favour of the young and beautiful Madame d'Étioles marked the triumph of the party of philosophers and men of letters, and that these should obtain favour from Louis XV. was indeed an achievement. But the unbending and tactless attitude adopted by the friends of the Dauphin during the recent illness of his Majesty, the perseverance of the Duc de Richelieu, and the charm and fascination of Madame d'Étioles herself, were causes that determined the King to court a publicity in his amours which, during the last six months, he had carefully avoided for fear of wounding the feelings of the Queen.

The first condition of a life spent in common with the new mistress at Versailles and Choisy was the separation from her husband of the person and the goods and chattels of Madame d'Étioles, a separation which was duly made legal by Le Châtelet. M. Lenormand d'Étioles, with great dignity, left Paris altogether, and accepted a post as Chief Inspector of Taxes, with the reversion of his uncle's office. He made no demands upon the King; his daughter, Alexandrine, remained in her mother's care, and was entrusted, for her education, to a convent.

It was then decided that Madame d'Étioles must change her name and title, so that all trace of the past might be effaced, and it was discovered that the title and Marquisate of Pompadour had returned to the Crown. This famous name belonged to the province of Limousin, a country which was famous for its nobility and gentry. It was for this reason that Louis XIV.,

who had never loved the independent noblesse of the provinces, had made the district a laughing-stock through the hand of his pamphleteer and immortal wit, Pocquelin de Molière, when the latter invented his M. de Pourceaugnac, of the province of Limousin. The King gave to Madame d'Étioles the title of Marquise de Pompadour, together with an income sufficient to keep up her salon in fitting and proper style. She now no longer compromised her husband's name, from whom she was legally separated; the name of d'Étioles, so well known in financial circles, was completely forgotten, and that of the Marquise de Pompadour became the only one recognised. Inasmuch as it was also necessary to settle an income on the newly created Marquise, the estates of Pompadour being but an empty title, enjoying something less than 4000 francs a year, the King purchased the Marquisate of Crécy en Brie, which yielded a revenue of 25,000 francs.

As a titled lady, the new Marquise had to be presented to the King, the Queen, and the princes and princesses of the royal family. She accomplished this duty with perfect propriety and decorum, in company with the Princesse de Conti, into whose hands the King entrusted the new Marquise. Most elegant were the bows she made, at this, her first introduction to Court life. The Queen addressed a few kindly words to the Marquise, and even went so far as to question her graciously concerning several ladies whom she had known. Saluting the Queen with every mark of respect, the Marquise replied: 'Madame, most anxiously do I desire to do all in your Majesty's service that you may be pleased to command.' The Marquise de Pompadour did not, however, at this period, occupy any office in the Queen's household. She usually resided at Choisy, a small house belonging to the King, which she preferred to all others. It was she who

conferred on the château and its environs the name of Choisy le Roi, which still lives, although the castle itself has succumbed to the devastating ravages of the spirit of industrialism.

The arrival of Madame de Pompadour wrought many changes, but none more striking than that which affected the state of the finances of the country. The Marquise was the cause of the revival of the devotion of the *fermiers-généraux* to the King, which had been suspended by Comptroller Orry, whom she replaced by M. de Machault, a man who had embraced the advanced theories of the new school of finance. The war was at its height, and for the campaign that was just about to open many money sacrifices were required, and heavy loans had to be levied. M. de Machault, acting in concert with the Marquise, left no stone unturned in his efforts to raise money. He hoped to be able, through the medium of the King's ministers, to obtain from Louis

permission to utilise a portion of the funds of the clergy to meet the national debts. Frederick of Prussia strongly advised such spoliation to M. d'Argenson. It became a question whether the Marquise, daring as she was in her ideas, would have enough influence over the King to induce him to accept them. It was no easy task, for Louis XV. maintained, throughout his life, a most profound respect for the Church.

Under Madame de Pompadour the philosophic party endeavoured to obtain a voice in the administration of the state: Voltaire, as the head of the party, was given a post in the department of foreign affairs. It must, in justice to him, be admitted that his books, in spite of their unfortunate tendency towards heresy and impiety, contain many practical ideas, a respect for a State hierarchy, for rank and aristocracy, a contempt of Parliament, and a mistrust of the lower classes of society. Voltaire was by inclination

an aristocrat; he loved a court, he loved the exercise of authority, and he was loyal in his relations with Louis. This prince, although he had little liking for men of letters, received Voltaire graciously enough, and was in his turn extolled by the latter in his verse in a most extravagant manner.

Voltaire had some very charming qualities, and he knew how to make the most of them; he was possessed of a very fertile imagination and knew how praise could best be bestowed. A witty and well-bred courtier, nearing his sixtieth year, he had, like Marshal Richelieu, played some part in the reign of Louis XIV., for which King Louis XV. preserved so profound an admiration. Voltaire, the author of *La Henriade* and of *Zaire*, could, when he chose, comport himself with the utmost decorum. Obedient to every whim of Madame de Pompadour, some of his most attractive verses were written at her command. It was at

her instigation that he composed a three-act comedy, entitled the *Princesse de Navarre*, on the occasion of the marriage of the Dauphin. And again, at the end of the campaign, he wrote a fairy play, *Le Temple et Le Gloire*, which was even more commonplace than the comedy. It was an allegory in which were introduced in turn—Desire, Apollo, the Nine Muses, shepherds and shepherdesses, the high priest of Glory, Bacchus, Erigone, nine Bacchantes, six Satyrs, priests of Mars and of Venus, Plotina, Junia, and Trajan. Louis XV. was Trajan, and Madame de Pompadour Plotina. At the production of the *Temple de la Gloire*, which took place at one of the King's hunting-boxes, Voltaire, carried away by feelings which were as theatrical as they were ridiculous, threw himself at the King's feet, exclaiming: 'And is Trajan well pleased?' Louis, surprised at the familiarity and grotesqueness of the action, replied drily: 'Yes, Voltaire; well enough!'

But the Marquise, that same evening, persuaded the King to attach Voltaire to his household as gentleman of the bedchamber. She herself bore all the expenses involved in the new dignity, and even allowed her poet to sell his office—while retaining the honours attaching to it—for the not inconsiderable sum of 150,000 francs. Voltaire, although a genius, was extremely grasping and avaricious, and accepted all he could get from the hands of Madame de Pompadour. In his later years he became at once cringing and ungrateful, for when in the pay of the King of Prussia he railed against the young woman who had sheltered him so hospitably at Étioles and Choisy.

IV

LA MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR. THE POETS—THE ARTISTS

(1745-1750)

THE chief characteristic of the eighteenth century was its power of taking life easily, and of smiling gaily in the face of all misfortunes; in the poetry, the music, or the painting of that time, there is nothing gloomy or sombre. The life of the eighteenth century was a life spent in a bower of roses, in the month of May, to the sound of clear spring water babbling over stones through a leafy grove; there was no work that had to be done, no task that had to be fulfilled; men spent their time in the pleasures of the senses, in the cultivation of the happy side of passion, and in the pursuit of love. The poets who surrounded Madame de

Pompadour formed a charming community, and it was in their society that Gentil Bernard, the secretary to the Duc de Coigny, composed his famous *Art d'Aimer*. Choisy became celebrated for delightful fêtes, of which Bernard was himself the originator; and for many years afterwards men continued to speak of that given on the first of May, in honour of the Marquise and the return of the flowers. The gardens of Choisy were renowned for their splendid lilac bushes and groves of roses, doubly beautiful by contrast with the masses of the pale blue periwinkle that clustered round their roots; and on this occasion the Marquise, adorned as Venus, seated upon a throne of daisies and sweet-smelling pinks, held sovereign sway among the flowers.

During the period in which Madame d'Étioles, still quite a young woman, was assembling under the roof of her château a distinguished company of artists and poets with a charm that

was all her own, among the most assiduous of the guests was to be noticed a certain elegant abbé, by name Bernis. He was a man of gay and open countenance, and, although his figure inclined to stoutness, of most distinguished appearance; he belonged to the noble family of Vivarais, but when he first came to Paris he was so poor that, on more occasions than one, M. de Ferréol had to lend him a few francs to pay his cab fare, when he wished to go into society. He was greatly appreciated in the salon for his charm and versatility, and his facility for verse-making. It could with justice be said of the young Abbé de Bernis that he was not sufficiently awake to the gravity of his position, and the straitlaced Cardinal de Fleury often said to him that he need never expect promotion in the Church at his hands. Bernis took refuge in the salon of the Château d'Étioles, and threw in his lot with that of the Marquise de

Pompadour at Choisy. From out the glistening spray of those bubbling fountains, from among those bowers of lilac and of roses, from that group of lovely statues, those garlanded vases, there arose a perfume of love, and it was Bernis who sang the deity of that charming spot in the style of a modern Tibullus. He was the Pindaric poet of the Marquise de Pompadour. Venus, the Graces, Love—the pagan triad that dominated the society that was gathered around her—were invoked by every poet and poetaster of the company. Among the prime favourites of the Marquise, besides Bernis and Gentil Bernard, we must include Marmontel, so very charming a character, especially before the time of his later and somewhat wearying manner, when he perpetrated his *Bélisaire*, a composition at once flat and unprofitable. Marmontel wrote his *Petits Contes*, to the delight of all who read them, and if, at the age of thirty, a greater lover of pleasure

than of philosophy, he had already written several dull tragedies, he was also known by his poetry, which he devoted to the praises of Louis XV. Marmontel was for a long time one of the guests of M. de la Popelinière, in his charming house at Passy, or his fine town residence, a hôtel which was even finer than the Elysée de Beaujon ; ten hôtels and sixty houses were, in later years, erected upon the ruins of M. de la Popelinière's garden alone. Madame de Pompadour summoned Marmontel to Choisy, and obtained for him the directorship of the *Mercure* and the promise of a secretaryship. There existed at this period a number of offices, yielding incomes of from 20,000 to 30,000 francs a year, which were devoted to poets and men of letters. Gentil Bernard, as secretary to the Colonel of Dragoons, received annually some 24,000 francs; Voltaire, as gentleman of the bedchamber, feathered his nest to the

tune of 150,000 francs. Such a state of affairs may be denounced as a grave abuse, it is true; but do men of genius, do the chosen spirits of any age, ever live on anything but privilege and favour?

Marmontel never forgot the benefits he had received at the hands of his beloved protectress. From his memoirs we are enabled to form a true estimate of the nature of Madame de Pompadour's protecting care, so full as it was of that delicacy of feeling that she always evinced towards misery, towards the arts, and towards genius. Her charity was not administered in the form of alms flung at a poet or an artist, as in modern times; but in a singularly gracious manner peculiar to herself she sought out needy men of letters and found them suitable offices, and loaded them with distinctions. Every Sunday at two o'clock Madame la Marquise would hold a reception in her charming boudoir at Choisy—a reception which we may be sure her three prime favourites,

Duclos, Bernis, and Marmontel, never failed to attend. The historiographer, Duclos, was lodged at the King's expense in the hôtel which was set apart for the adminstration of foreign affairs, and enjoyed a pension of 12,000 francs. Bernis, whom, it must be admitted, the Marquise spoiled, resided in the Tuileries itself, in a charming suite of rooms, which she had furnished for him; all the pictures and statues of his salon were the work of Madame de Pompadour's own hand; and for this reason worth far more than a mere gift of money. Marmontel and Gentil Bernard, the ostensible originators and directors of the fêtes given at Choisy, were in the habit of listening to the advice and taking the counsel of a true artist, who, in her turn, recommended them to the King's notice in a manner so tactful and kindly as to show beyond doubt the true goodness of her heart.

This protective solicitude of the Marquise was never refused to genuine

merit, no matter how it manifested itself. The elder Crébillon, ruined and in poor health, had nothing to live upon save the reputation his tragedies had brought him. Again and again was the Marquise told that Crébillon, the younger, had, in his notorious *Contes*, made insulting allusions to the King and his amours: her kindness towards the father never ceased. She procured him a pension of 3000 francs and a lodging in the Louvre, besides the post of librarian at Choisy, which brought him 5000 francs. After the brilliant representation of his *Catilina*, Madame de Pompadour obtained for him the honour of a reprint of all his works, which were issued from the Royal Printing Press free of charge; she even offered to engrave the tail-pieces herself. Greatly delighted at being so highly honoured, the old man, who was then in his eighty-second year, travelled to Choisy to thank the Marquise in person for her kindness.

She happened to be indisposed, but, being very anxious to receive him, she called him to her and made him sit down on the edge of her bed. Just as the poet, completely carried away by his feelings of gratitude, was about to seize the hand of the Marquise, the King entered, and Crébillon exclaimed in mock despair: 'Ah! Madame, we are lost. The King has caught us!' Louis laughed heartily at the words of the aged poet, and stooped to kiss the hand of the Marquise, as if to say: 'Behold the favoured lover!'

The favour that Crébillon found in the eyes of Louis was a source of very great annoyance to Voltaire; indeed it was one of the reasons for his spitefulness towards Madame de Pompadour. Fontenelle, too, an old man of about the same age as Crébillon, was equally annoyed at it. The King made no secret of his dislike for this blasphemer against the writings of Holy Scripture, with his cold and selfish nature, who

had so ungratefully denounced his kind benefactress, the Duchesse de Maine. And yet Fontenelle had need of Madame de Pompadour more than once, and on no occasion can it be said that she failed him.

The Château of Choisy was the temple of the Muses and the home of Pleasure; the Marquise knew how to combine the delights of the senses with those of the spirit. She danced with the spontaneousness of a child, and, as the King was fond of rounds and roundelays, she composed songs to charm his ear. It is to her we owe that delightfully fresh and simple round which begins with the lines:

'Nous n'irons plus au bois
Les lauriers sont coupés.'

There is more life, more true poetry, in this couplet, than in all the pedantic flights of fancy of all the philosophers put together: a crown of roses, jonquils, hyacinths, and lilac circling the pure white forehead of a little child! The King, who was as a rule so difficult to

amuse, took no small part in these childish delights of the Marquise, and danced and sang with the enthusiasm of a young girl. The round was a dance characteristic of the French, and the words that mingled with the dance were the outcome of sentiments at once tender, pure, and gay; and a band of men and women, as sportive as little children, sang of the nightingale, the grasshopper, the thrush, the woodbine, and the strawberry as they circled round the laurels with which the King had crowned himself at Fontenoy.

From her earliest youth, even in the days before her marriage with M. Lenormand d'Étioles, the Marquise de Pompadour had cultivated the fine arts: design, painting, crayon drawing, and above all engraving, an art that afforded distraction, I might almost say repose, to all the great artists of the eighteenth century, were all practised; the graving-tool would be picked up after the paint brush had been thrown

down in weariness. This passion for art became more ardent, and its result far more imposing, after the Marquise had established her sovereignty at Versailles and at Choisy, and allowed herself to be surrounded by such men as Bouchardon, Boucher, Parrocel, Latour, the younger Vernet (at that time little more than a boy), Vien, and the architect Gabriel. She encouraged them and, what is far more dear to a true artist, she loved them. Twice a week she received them at Choisy, worked with them and conversed with them. Louis XV. shared her enthusiasm, and joined with her in showering favours upon the artists of her choice.

The Marquise had, on one occasion, singled out an engraver in stone of very great talent, one Leguay, a native of Marseilles. When but a child he had travelled into Italy and Greece, collecting as he went cameos, jewels, and stones of Athens and of Rome, the precious remains of an ancient civilisa-

tion and a pagan art, which, to judge by the monuments of it that remain to us, must indeed have reached a high state of perfection. Leguay lived in great intimacy with Louis XV. and the Marquise de Pompadour at Choisy. Bouchardon too was influenced by the art of antiquity, as is shown in his works, which fill the halls and corridors at Versailles; his great water-piece, 'Neptune,' was probably inspired by the study of an ancient cameo. Louis XIV. had conceived Versailles, and had left it, a grand and noble building, formal and severe in its simplicity. Louis XV. and Madame de Pompadour gave full play to fancy in their embellishment and decoration of the palace. Bouchardon, his genius aided by inspiration from the Marquise, was responsible for the majority of the great water-pieces of the dragons, of Apollo and the Muses, and the like, and his name, partly effaced by the ravages of time, and half hidden beneath the verdant

moss, is still to be seen engraved upon the beautiful figure of Triton in his fountain of Neptune, which is held up by countless Cupids who have succeeded in subduing the dreadful dragon. Mythological subjects were a passion of the eighteenth century.

Madame de Pompadour, for her garden at Choisy, entrusted Bouchardon with the execution of a very charming subject, designed by herself, in which a youthful Cupid is seen breaking up the club of Hercules and the sword of Mars to fashion for himself a quiverful of arrows, symbolic of the power of love over material force. It was from her design, too, that Bouchardon copied his equestrian statue of the King. Many a time, seated at the feet of the King, did the Marquise endeavour to reproduce his noble features, employing in the task the skill that had enabled her to perfect her art, while the King smiled encouragingly upon her efforts. Her attempts

never failed to win the applause of Boucher, always so great a favourite with Madame de Pompadour, and at that time in the heyday of his fame; nor did he hesitate to correct her mistakes. A pupil of Baudoin, a painter of the nude who belonged to the romantic school, Boucher had, at the age of twenty-one, made a journey into Italy, and, without in any way disparaging the art of the ancients, he had decided that for the witty and gallant people who went by the name of Frenchmen there was required an art especially adapted to their tastes and their fancies. Boucher's special characteristic — his colouring, with its suggestion of jasmine and roses—will always remind us of that society of gay nobles and lovely marquises, with their rouge and their patches and their powdered hair.

Although Boucher was, and deservedly, the painter for whom Madame de Pompadour had the strongest predilection, her tastes were by no means exclu-

sive, for we find Vien, a man of an entirely different school, also living in intimate friendship with the Marquise. Vien, an ardent admirer of the antique, had a friend and a pupil in the Marquis de Marigny, a younger brother of Madame de Pompadour, and an extremely amiable and brilliant youth. When the Marquise was admitted to share the honours of Choisy, her brother, then eighteen years of age, was made Marquis de Vandières, at the same time that M. Lenormand de Turneheim, the uncle of the Marquise, and patron of Voltaire, the most serious as well as the most enthusiastic of amateurs in art, was nominated to the post of Superintendent of Public Buildings. The office was really intended for the young Marquis de Vandières, but Madame de Pompadour desired that her young brother should fit himself for the lofty functions of a more important office by means of a preliminary course of serious study.

To this end, she demanded the King's permission for the young Marquis to travel through Italy, not as a man of leisure seeking amusement and distraction, but as an enthusiastic and zealous disciple of art; and, having gained her request, the Marquise herself chose her brother's companions for the journey: Cochin, the King's inimitable engraver; Soufflot, the architect, and the Abbé Leblanc, a man with a tendency to prosiness when on the subject of the ancients, but steeped in the spirit of art, and a scholarly interpreter of medals and inscriptions. The Marquis de Vandières stayed two years in Italy, at Rome and at Naples, and, among other things, superintended some valuable excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii. On his return the King evinced great pleasure in listening to the account of his travels; he entrusted him with the office which his uncle had been keeping open for him, and honoured him with the title of Marquis

de Marigny. He became known as a noble patron of the arts, and his name is associated with countless artistic undertakings. He was a friend of the first Vernet, who dedicated to him the beautiful sea-pieces which he had designed for the tops of the doors at Choisy.

At this time—the period of the longest of all the visits to Choisy—the Marquise employed her artistic talents principally in engraving and design. Through the care of a devoted company of amateurs, a thin folio volume has been preserved, entitled *L'Œuvre de la Marquise de Pompadour*. Indescribable are the emotions with which we examine or, it may be, set ourselves to copy, these perfect little works of art, at the foot of which is invariably to be found the inscription '*Pompadour fecit*,' as if the Marquise was only too proud and happy to associate herself with her companions of the studio. The work is of

a varied nature, and we find therein engravings of pictures bearing the names of Boucher, Vien, and Leguay; the Marquise does not appear to have shown a preference for the work of any particular artist: and always at the foot of the engraving we read '*Pompadour sculpsit.*'

Her predilection, however, was for engraving on stone after the manner of the ancients—a branch of art in which Leguay showed such wonderful skill. Madame de Pompadour herself used to engrave upon the onyx, the emerald, and the cornelian stone, and upon ivory; occasionally she contented herself with using the graving tool to reproduce the works of the great masters. At the beginning of the precious collection which I have just mentioned we find a portrait of the Marquise de Pompadour, painted by Boucher and engraved by herself with the finish and daintiness of the best days of the Flemish school.

The first work is a reproduction on the onyx of a somewhat laboured design of Vien, representing allegorically the triumph of Louis XV. at Fontenoy. The King is seated upon an ancient chariot, drawn by four horses, after the manner of the Roman Emperors; Victory, a goddess with wings unfurled, crowns the forehead of the King with a wreath of laurel. The whole is suggestive of one of Trajan's medallions. On the same page is a portrait of Louis XV., originally engraved on the sardonyx by Leguay, and copied with marvellous skill by the Marquise. But the chef-d'œuvre of the collection is a subject from the antique, engraved on ivory, composed of nine principal figures: nymphs, more than half naked, are sporting with satyrs and little children, beneath the interwoven branches of a beautiful vine, which crowns them with its clusters of ripe fruit. On their countenances is depicted the maddening

ecstasy of intense delight, as they clasp and embrace one another beneath the grape-laden vine plants. It might be a copy of a bas-relief taken from the walls of the Villa Borghese.

In another engraving we come upon a picture of three plump little urchins, in the manner of Boucher; one is drinking out of a little bowl, another is shaking a reed, while the third is blowing soap-bubbles to the four winds of heaven. At the bottom of the engraving we again find the inscription: '*Pompadour sculpsit*'; and by the side of it there is a splendid engraving of a head, to represent Peace. In another engraving, by Vien, is represented Apollo crowning the spirit of painting and of sculpture.

Upon an onyx stone we find engraved the figure of a woman, enveloped in the folds of a long flowing robe, like a vestal virgin offering a sacrifice to the gods: '*Vien delineavit. Pompadour sculpsit*';—and on a cornelian stone is

Minerva, the patroness of engraving. Madame de Pompadour engraved Boucher's figure of 'Friendship' on an agate—friendship was her household god, and friendship the sentiment she hoped to inspire in the King, a strong and lasting sentiment, after the passionate ardour of his love had spent itself. She also engraved Boucher's 'Temple of Friendship' on a beautiful Indian topaz, the King's seal on an emerald, and, on a cornelian stone, the portraits of the Dauphin and Dauphine.

Bearing the signature '*Pompadour sculpsit*,' we find, too, a fine head of a satyr, engraved on the onyx and sardonyx, after Vien, and 'The Rape of Dejanira,' copied from a bas-relief in Hadrian's Villa. Occasionally we find Madame de Pompadour herself supplying the design to her engraving: '*Pompadour delineavit et sculpsit.*' Instances of this are to be found in an engraving on agate of the Spirit of

Music, and of a grotesque military figure which had caught the attention of Louis XV. at one of his reviews. The engraving represented Jacquot, a drummer in the King's regiment, and one of the bravest soldiers that fought at Fontenoy. But these are exceptions. As a rule Madame de Pompadour engraved from originals of Boucher or Vien; on the sardonyx she has reproduced an admirable representation of Love and the Soul; of Love cultivating a myrtle-plant; of Bacchus, as a child, crowned with a vine trail, playing amid the branches of the vine. And on the emerald she has done an Egyptian priest of Boucher, and on a white cornelian stone 'Love sacrificed to Friendship'—a touching allusion to her delicate position with the King.

It is not difficult to understand the enthusiasm of the artists of her day for this young woman, with so refined a taste and so nice a discrimination, who lived

among them as a friend and associated herself with their work, enjoying the freedom that belongs to a brotherhood of men of genius all the world over. Her younger brother, the Marquis de Marigny, who had been educated with a view to the duties of his official position under the Crown, was himself at this time already an artist of distinction; during the two years that he had spent in Italy he had perfected himself in the technical part of his art by copying the antiques in the museums of Rome and of Naples. King Louis, who was an ardent lover of the arts, was in the habit of bidding the young Marquis to supper; the evening was the time for the presentation of those artists who happened to be engaged in painting and ornamenting the rooms and corridors of the palace. A salon or a bedroom was, at this period, a work of art in itself; the ceiling and the tops of the doors were sometimes the masterpieces of some great artist. The

backs of sofas and chairs, and screens were made the framework of the most beautiful paintings. The artist enjoyed a power equal to that of the most favoured courtier. Never in the whole course of her life was the Marquise other than a generous patron of art; never did she fail to take advantage of an opportunity of forwarding its cause, as is seen in her acquisition of a considerable portion of the famous collection of Crozat.

Joseph-Antoine Crozat, a constant visitor at Étioles, had known the Marquise from a child. He was the son of that very wealthy financier and treasurer of the States of Languedoc who, towards the end of the reign of Louis XIV., founded the colony of Louisiana. Joseph-Antoine Crozat dedicated his life and his fortune to the cause of art. The possessor of an enormous fortune, he had collected masterpieces of all the great painters, especially those of the Flemish school.

Such was the character of the financiers of that period; they were both large-minded and open-handed, and money with them was but a means wherewith to encourage needy men of genius, or of introducing pleasure and refinement into our short and uncertain lives. Crozat aspired to the possession of the finest private picture gallery in the world, and definitely set himself the task of acquiring it. The elaborate work which bears the title of the *Cabinet de Crozat* is to this day our authority when the genuineness of an old master is contested. The second volume was published by Mariette, under the auspices of Madame de Pompadour, after Crozat's death. Mariette was a great favourite with the Marquise, and her affectionate and faithful friend; she entrusted to him the keeping of the King's collection of etchings and lithographs. Crozat and Mariette between them have preserved a record of all the great paintings discovered at

Naples and Rome. The Marquise even retained the services of the famous scholar, Basan, whose work it was to compile art catalogues and guides for all who loved painting or sculpture. The love of art, that sacred passion by which even money is ennobled, is the true justification of an enormous fortune, and surely Madame de Pompadour may be forgiven the large sums which she expended in gratifying her passion for the work which was being carried on by her friends, the artists.

V

MADAME DE POMPADOUR—THE LETTRES-DE-CACHET—LA BASTILLE AND LATUDE

(1750-1751)

In introducing into the life of the King the highly elevating recreation afforded by art and letters, the Marquise had a

definite end in view. She had but one wish—that of increasing her influence over Louis and of strengthening her power. She began by encouraging the King to work with his ministers and secretaries of State in her own salon, and occasionally to listen to the advice she herself gave, as Louis XIV. had listened to the counsel of Madame de Maintenon. The Marquise was eminently just in her dealings with men, and extremely clear-headed; if she erred, it was on the side of scepticism. It is difficult to understand how King Louis XV., who had been brought up in so strict a manner, and had always been so faithful a follower of at anyrate the outward observances of his religion, could have come to live in such complete harmony with a woman who showed so marked an indifference to religious opinions and beliefs.

It is, nevertheless, incontestable that the Marquise de Pompadour had a

great influence over the affairs of her day, and she has been accused, among other things, of multiplying the number of the *lettres-de-cachet*, often from purely selfish motives. I am sometimes led to wonder, when studying history, how it is that writers who have praised and exalted the women of the Revolution —the charming creatures who plucked out and feasted upon the entrails of Suleau, and carried about with them the heads of decapitated lifeguardsmen— could never bring themselves to unbend towards the women of the eighteenth century. And how, after having extolled the Board of Public Safety for having put 120,000 suspects under arrest, they can venture to express their indignation at the fact that a mere handful of *lettres-de-cachet* were directed, from motives of policy, against sedition and discontent. Madame de Pompadour was, moreover, never entrusted with the administration of the department of the *lettres-de-cachet*, which was in the

hands of the Secretary of State attached to the King's household. These letters were carefully discussed in Council, and few, if any, owed their origin to caprice or to interests of but small import to the country: fathers requested *lettres-de-cachet* for reprobate sons; by this means, too, did the State punish abduction, duelling, conspiracy, the shameless vices of the nobility, disobedience, and literary attacks upon society. Authority ceases to exist as soon as the right to chastise those who dare to conspire against it is forfeited.

On the 15th of May 1750 Madame de Pompadour received a little packet of white powder in a letter, in which she was informed that the powder was a violent poison, calculated to kill in a very few hours. At the same time, in precise terms, a plot against the King was laid bare, and a list of accomplices appended, which included many of the highest Court functionaries. It was a serious time for France;

men spoke of nothing but conspiracy and murder. The Marquise gave orders for a close inquiry to be made into the allegations, and the Lieutenant-General of Police was ordered to seek out the author of the letter and thoroughly to investigate the details of the accusation which had accompanied the white powder. It was by no means certain whether the letter contained information concerning a genuine plot, or whether the whole thing was not a calumny fabricated for the purpose of turning the attention of the Court from conspiracies that were only too real and likely enough to be of fatal import to those against whom they were directed.

Nicolas-Réné Berryer, son of the Attorney-General, a member of Parliament, who later became the Intendant of Poitou, was a man of strong and upright character, who had married Mademoiselle de Fribois, a young lady who came of a family of financiers

closely united with the Étioles and the Turneheims, and who, for this reason, stood high in the confidence of Madame de Pompadour. In his capacity of Lieutenant of Police, Berryer proceeded to make minute inquiries into the accusations that had been laid before Madame de Pompadour. He succeeded in proving the undoubted innocence of all those whose names were mentioned in the letter, and that the only guilty man was the author of the calumny himself; a search for him was, therefore, instituted. It can hardly be said that there was anything in any way out of order in this proceeding. As a result of the inquiry it was found that the letter was the work of a petty Gascon noble, already well known as a man much addicted to drawing the long bow, one Henri Mazers de Latude, born at Montagnac, in Languedoc. Destined by his family for the profession of arms, Mazers de Latude had studied for a long time in Holland among a

band of Protestant refugees, enemies of his own country. Upon his return to France he tried to eke out his existence by gambling, and when his position became desperate he turned informer, endeavouring by the aid of calumny to improve his impoverished condition. When arrested under the law which punishes calumniators, he was interrogated by the Lieutenant-General of Police, and his replies showed that he was not lacking in ability; in his defence he brought forward his right to deserve well of the court for services he had rendered —all of which were imaginary: in his capacity of officer in the army he was summarily punished and imprisoned in Vincennes. In the second month of his confinement Latude escaped; we can hardly reproach him for shaking off his close-fitting vestments of stone and iron, for who among us does not aspire to liberty and freedom? The Lieutenant-General did not even

trouble to pursue him. Latude would have been forgotten had he not set himself once more to calumniate the innocent and denounce the faithful. He had again to be arrested, and he was taken from the furnished hôtel where he had been living peaceably for six months, and flung, this time, into the Bastille. The Governor was warned against his prisoner's dexterity and genius for finding means of escape, and gave orders that extra precautions should be used in the guarding of Latude; but after he had been in prison for some months discipline was relaxed, and, at the request of Madame de Pompadour herself, he was given a lodging in the citadel. During his residence there he threw in his lot with another Gascon, of a character similar to his own, d'Alègre by name, and the two contrived to make good their escape with a coolness and daring which we cannot but admire. They sought refuge in Holland,

and associated themselves with the plots and counter-plots of the Protestant refugees and the Jansenists. Latude was caught and shut up once more in the Bastille; the Governor was compelled to take such precautions against his attempting to regain his liberty as are necessary with all prisoners who have once succeeded in making good their escape. The prisoner was, however, allowed sufficient liberty to enable him to compile a military treatise, which he addressed to the Minister for War. Latude was a man of rare intellect, and his ideas were both novel and suggestive; the minister offered him his liberty on condition that he would return to his birthplace, Montagnac. But Latude refused to accept a condition that involved his ending his days in peace and retirement. A series of haughty and almost insolent letters followed, and it became necessary for him again to be confined, even more rigorously than

before. Madame de Pompadour was entirely ignorant of the relations that existed between the Minister for War and Latude; the Lieutenant of Police was the intermediary between Latude and the Governor of the Bastille. Being under orders to keep a careful lookout for any plots and conspiracies that might arise at the time of going to war, the Lieutenant was obliged to take every precaution against a man who had associated himself with all the refugee intrigues of his time. Mazers de Latude remained, therefore, a state prisoner in the Bastile.

It is necessary that we should follow this man's career to its end, and anticipate events a little in order to judge of the character of the attack made upon him. If the captivity of Latude was the result of personal vengeance on the part of Madame de Pompadour, how can we account for the fact that it continued long after the death of the Marquise. When he succeeded in

escaping from prison under cover of a dense fog, how was it that M. de Sartine, a minister persistently hostile to the policy of Madame de Pompadour, caused him once more to be put under arrest? Or again, how was it that the kindly and generous-hearted Duc de Choiseul had him imprisoned in Bicêtre, and that M. de Malesherbes, visiting the prison in 1775 (in the reign of Louis XVI.), utterly ignored his claims to freedom?

The warrant for his release was not signed until 1777, and then he was again asked to give the same promise that M. Berryer had imposed upon him —to remain at home at Montagnac; Mazers de Latude once more broke his word, and came to Paris, and, upon his renewing his intrigues, M. de Malesherbes himself issued the order for his confinement in Bicêtre. He left this retreat several years later, only to become mixed up in all the plots of that troublous time: in the affair

of the Queen's Diamond Necklace and Cardinal Rohan, and in the agitations that arose out of the publication of Necker's *Compte Rendu*—an attempt at a real statement of the financial position of the country. Mirabeau's constant companion in the Bastille, and a partisan of the most advanced revolutionary party, Mazers de Latude laid a petition before the National Assembly which was full of angry and insulting aspersions directed against Madame de Pompadour. The time was indeed ripe for a diatribe against despotism and the courtesans of kings. After a long examination of the paper, the Assembly, acting on the advice of Barnave, decided to ignore it and passed on to the general business of the day. Mirabeau himself said of Latude that he was an intriguer who sought *la liberté du bruit.*

In pursuing the melodrama to its close, we find the last scene enacted on the boulevard, on the 10th of

August 1793, during the Reign of Terror. On that day citoyen Mazers de Latude brought an instance against the heirs of Citoyenne Pompadour, courtesan of Capet, fifteenth of that name. In order to make a more striking effect on the people, Latude had preceded his demand by an exhibition, at the door of the Louvre, of the ladder and rope by which he had effected his escape. He placed himself by the side of his trophies, adorned with a shaggy beard and groaning under heavy chains. He claimed a sum of 60,000 francs damages from the heirs of the courtesan Pompadour, and received finally, after a lengthy lawsuit, an indemnity of 6000, which was paid in paper. From the time of the consulate, Latude was completely forgotten. A strong Government, devoting itself to repressive measures, naturally allowed such intriguing babblers, whose only desire was to seek notoriety by ruffling the peaceful

waters of the State, to sink into oblivion. Latude, therefore, disappeared in 1805 without causing any further disturbance, having for one day occupied the attention of the people by the publication of his memoirs—a fabrication for which we are indebted solely to his imagination, and which proved of the same interest to the world in general as the reminiscences of Abbé Bucquoy or of Baron Trenck.

We have said enough on the subject of Latude and his bid for fame. Can anyone possibly venture to assert that it was Madame de Pompadour who persecuted him? Had he not, eager, restless spirit that he was, laid bare countless imaginary plots and branded a multitude of innocent people? And the laws of civilised nations, moreover, have framed just penalties for the calumniator; surely calumny is punishable by law! And again, what system of police is there in the world that can afford to neglect to take extra pre-

cautions against a prisoner clever and daring enough to effect his escape four times? We are almost tempted to think that this extraordinary success in flight suggests precautions more lenient than harsh, and supervision of a very mild order.

What motive could Madame de Pompadour have had for persecuting Mazers de Latude, an unknown man of no fortune? Was he an obstacle in her path? Or would the fact that he was at liberty have added to her anxiety —an ever-present one—concerning the King's friendship for her? Madame de Pompadour was too much of an artist, too busy with the concerns of the sunny afternoon of life — painting, sculpture, music—to be vindictive or spiteful; Latude was too insignificant for her to trouble about him or his insinuations; she left him in safekeeping, in the hands of the Lieutenant of Police. The affair occupied for no more than a month the fertile and

active brain of the Marquise. She was anxious for the King during the time that he was threatened by calumny, but beyond that she never troubled herself.

If the number of *lettres-de-cachet* that were issued during the reign of Madame de Pompadour was considerable, it was owing to the political strife that raged between the King and the Parliament on matters both financial and religious. There was need of rigorous action, but it was decided upon at the Council Board, not in the salon of the Marquise. This Council was composed of grave and serious men, well versed in affairs of State. Only in a novel or a play do we hear the Bastille spoken of lightly, or of a *lettre-de-cachet* as something which was as often as not the outcome of a King's whim or a mistress's caprice. In real life such a warrant was issued after serious consideration, and then only in support of justice or of a policy which was at once necessary and farsighted.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

VI

THE AMUSEMENTS OF CHOISY-LE-ROI—THE PLAY—FOREIGN AFFAIRS

(1750-1751)

In accordance with the spirit of the age of the eighteenth century, Pleasure walked ever hand in hand with Duty: whether in time of war, when in winter quarters, or in time of peace, when the day was one's own, men laughed and amused themselves, made verses, and acted comedies. The château at Choisy was the centre of well-nigh indescribable gaiety. The Marquise de Pompadour knew only too well that the King had to be amused, and that the noblest relaxation for a royal prince was to be found in pleasures of the intellect, in the arts, in the give and take of brilliant talkers, and that a salon glittering with candles, or a dining-hall where again

and again men drank to glory and to love, were fitting scenes for the enactment of such dissipation. Her endeavours to lessen the King's passion for the chase were in vain. Louis loved hunting from long-rooted habit, and from the necessity he was under to take strenuous exercise. And what was more in his eyes than habit or need of fresh air was the opportunity the chase presented of an incognito, an impromptu visit. '*Le Roi est en chasse*' formed the pretext for his entry into the château of a simple nobleman, whom he wished to honour with an unceremonious visit. It was thus that he visited Madame de Pompadour at Crécy, sometimes remaining there for a whole week. The Marquise was anxious to reintroduce the fashion of hunting the falcon; but the officers of the Royal Falconry themselves had lost the traditions of the sport: only a small number could still distinguish the difference between '*haute volerie*' in which were

concerned the falcon, the gerfalcon, the stone-falcon or the merlin, and the saker, all of which flew against the wind and very high—and '*basse volerie*,' the gos-hawk, and the sparrow-hawk and others, who, driven hither and thither before the wind, only got up a very little way.

When still quite a young girl, forming one of the distinguished company that surrounded M. Lenormand de Turne-heim, Madame de Pompadour had acted in comedy and operetta with such remarkable success that praise of her acting was in everyone's mouth. She was the delight of M. de Villemur, who had constructed a very fine theatre in his splendid château at Chantemerle. Madame d'Étioles used to say her lines with spirit, dignity, and restraint; she was exceptionally good in the rôle of an artless peasant girl, such as Madame Favart had made fashionable. As soon as she became the queen of beautiful Choisy, the Marquise decided to build a theatre, and act before the King, who

never tired of seeing her in some fresh rôle. She set apart a portion of the *cabinet des médailles*, one of the most elaborate apartments in existence, for the theatre, and designed the drop-scene herself. The architect, Gabriel, constructed the little building, and Boucher painted the side-scenes with that ease which was so characteristic of his delightful genius.

Among the curiosities which a love of research has put into my hands, by no means the least interesting is a certain theatre programme printed on beautiful silver paper and ornamented in the charming style that only the eighteenth century knew how to adopt. It was distributed at a representation of Voltaire's *Enfant Prodigue*, at Choisy; the names of the artistes afford us more interest than the piece itself, for they are as follows: Marshal Maurice de Saxe, who played the part of Euphémon, a father who was kind one moment and crabby the next; M.

de Nivernais, Euphémon, his son; the Duc de Duras, Fierrenfat (the president); the Duc d'Ayen, Royon, a worthy burgher of Cognac; and the Duc de Coigny, Jasmin, valet to Euphémon. Madame de Marchais took the part of Lise, Euphémon's daughter; the Marquise de Pompadour played Martha, a petulant soubrette; Madame de Brancas, always very amusing in an affected, pretentious part, played that of the Baronne de Croupillac. The piece had a great success, and the King himself applauded the efforts of the artistes more than once.

The decision of the Marquise to produce a comedy by Voltaire at Choisy was not influenced so much by the charm of his style or the boldness of his situations, as by the desire, which she always felt, of being of assistance to the poets and men of letters and the philosophers and, above all, to Voltaire, for whom, on account of his impieties, the King had but little liking. She

wished, in accordance with the poet's own ambitions, to find him a place in the Department for Foreign Affairs, under the Marquis d'Argenson. Voltaire, well aware of the kind intentions of the Marquise, addressed letter after letter to her, full of gratitude for her kindness and enthusiasm for her talents: Arouet laid his dramas, his poetry, his genius at the feet of his protectress; he himself, in his capacity of gentleman in waiting, directed the rehearsals. The Court pleased Voltaire, for it was on great lords and lovely ladies that he knew best how to lavish his praise. It was at the conclusion of the production of his *Enfant Prodigue* at Choisy that Voltaire composed some very pretty verses on the Marquise: 'who embellished the Court, Parnassus and Cythera; the delight of every eye, beloved treasure of one alone.' The King was inclined to think the lines a little too familiar; but after all they contained an exceedingly

gracious eulogy of his mistress! How was it possible to reprimand their author?

The principal artistes of the little Choisy theatre, besides Mesdames de Marchais and de Brancas, were Mesdames d'Estrades, Courtenvaux and Maillebois; side by side with Marshal Saxe were to be seen Messieurs de Richelieu, de Nivernais, de Coigny, d'Entragues, Duras and a number of other gentlemen. The director of this improvised theatre was the Duc de la Vallière; the Abbé de Lagarde was the prompter; Crébillon and Gresset gave the company the benefit of their great experience by presiding over the rehearsals. At that time men lived for the theatre; actors and actresses of renown received the homage of mankind, nor were even the dancers neglected; some of Voltaire's most charming lines are addressed to Mesdemoiselles Lecouvreur, Gaussin, Camargo, Sallé—ladies whose names appear

on every page of the *chroniques scandaleuses* of Paris and Versailles.

After Voltaire's *Enfant Prodigue*, *Le Méchant*, by Gresset, was produced. In it the Duc de Nivernais played the part of Valère with such skill that he was preferred to his master, Ricali, of the Comédie Française. To console the artiste for a preference which could not fail to hurt his vanity, it is said that the Duc de Nivernais sent him a present of 200 louis. Madame de Pompadour was a bewitching actress; and to a voice of great beauty was added a little affected simper that was extraordinarily attractive. In a comedy, entitled *Zélie*, into which songs with music by Ferrand were introduced, the Marquise filled the principal part to perfection, surpassing all others in her rendering of the couplets. A ballet was added to this little play, in which the chief parts of the dance were sustained by the Marquis de Courtenvaux, the Comte

de Langeron and the Duc de Melfort. The corps de ballet and the choruses were not quite up to the excellent standard of the rest of the piece; the King was pleased to remark that the singing was worse than his own, which was considered to be the grossest insult it was possible to throw at an opera chorus, for no one in the whole of Louis' kingdom sang more out of tune than he.

The piece in which Madame de Pompadour achieved her greatest success in the theatre at Choisy was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Devin de Village*, produced for the first time at the theatre at Fontainebleau during one of the visits of the Court to that secluded spot; the play struck the King's fancy and made a great impression upon him. Although Rousseau had, at the time of the first presentation of his play before the King, conducted himself in an unmannerly fashion, ill-bred fellow that he was, his Majesty was,

nevertheless, very much taken with the charming little piece, and all that day he went about humming the air: '*J'ai perdu mon serviteur.*' Madame de Pompadour lost no time in getting up the part of Colette. Exquisitely did she repeat the lines:

'Si des galants de la ville
J'eusse écouté les discours,
Oh! qu'il m'eût été facile
De former d'autres amours.'

And the Marquis de Courtenvaux, as Colin, showed remarkable talent in his pathetic rendering of the words:

'Non, Colette n'est point trompeuse,
Elle m'a promis sa foi;
Peut-elle être amoureuse
D'un autre berger que moi?'

While they sang together the charming duet, into which it is possible to put so much feeling:

'Ah! l'amour ne sait guère
Ce qu'il permet, ce qu'il défend,
C'est un enfant, c'est un enfant!'

Both the sentiment and the music

of these lines were exactly suited to the taste of society in the eighteenth century, and appealed to it in much the same way as did the pastels of Latour. Voltaire was extremely jealous of the favour with which Rousseau's work and Crébillon's tragedies were received. He never forgave success in a piece not his own. Bitterly incensed with the Court, he went so far as to write epigrams on Madame la Marquise, but always with the exercise of great caution. To retaliate, Madame de Pompadour conceived the idea of bringing before the King, for his amusement, in the theatre at Fontainebleau, a parody on Voltaire's *Sémiramis*. The sublime is ever near to the ridiculous, and for the same reason a masterpiece and its parody are never far removed from one another. A man with feelings less susceptible than the poet's would have accepted the pleasantry with a smile, and taken it as a good joke. Not so Voltaire: so far from sub-

mitting to what is after all frequently the only reward of great and engrossing labour, he allowed the supposed indignity to take so great a hold upon him that he became morose, irritable, and spiritless. As he was unable to approach Madame de Pompadour direct, he addressed himself to Queen Marie Leczinska. His letter still remains, a monument of false pride and lack of dignity: 'Be pleased to remember, Madame, that I am the servant of his Majesty, and consequently your own: a word, in your great kindness, to Monsieur le Duc de Fleury would prevent a scandal which cannot fail in the end to ruin me. I dare to hope that I may have touched your pity, and that I may, after having so many times painted Virtue in its true colours, be now rewarded by Her protection."

The Queen did, indeed, intervene, and the parody of *Sémiramis* was not produced. Queen Marie had known Voltaire, when she was a child, at the

Court of her father, King Stanislas. He was then a dissipated debauchee, and a confirmed atheist. At Nancy Madame du Châtelet held her 'plenary court'; Madame de Boufflers Saint-Lambert and King Stanislas were enthusiastic patrons of this mixture of philosophy and sensuality, the charms of which were so gaily sung by Voltaire. King Stanislas, in particular, went out of his way to show him favour, and it was when Voltaire had already become a prey to jealousy and petty spite that he inclined his ear to the flattering proposals of the King of Prussia, made with a view to enticing him to Berlin. It was at this period that Voltaire began to malign Madame de Pompadour, and to taunt her with her lack of birth, calling her *grisette* and *soubrette*, and other opprobrious epithets, forgetful of all the benefits he had received at the hands of the family of Étioles.

At the château at Choisy, charming country retreat that it was, festivities

of a most distinguished and tasteful nature continued to be the order of the day. After the play came supper, a pleasant hour of rest. The King was in the habit of bidding to supper some fourteen to sixteen guests, at most; they would all make their way towards an elegantly furnished drawing-room, where they would be surrounded with charming specimens of the art of Latour, Watteau, and Boucher—representations of hunting scenes and hunting parties, where huntsmen were gaily feasting and drinking to the sound of the horn, which announced that the dogs too were being fed. There was nothing in any way suggestive of preparation for a repast in the lovely room, except that, on the floor, one caught sight of a beautiful rose-shaped piece of fine oak surrounded with ivory arabesques.

When the King had entered the salon, two youthful page-boys would come forward and, with a profound

and reverent bow, demand the orders of his Majesty for supper. No sooner had the King replied that it might be served, than the rose in the centre was raised, and there appeared, just as in the far-famed Palace of Armida, a table lit by hundreds and hundreds of candles, covered with flagons and glass and silver plate and crystal and porcelain vases. Pages served the supper with wonderful rapidity; these pages, who were great favourites with the King, were youths of noble family, who, at the age of fifteen, left their duties as page and proceeded loyally to serve the King as lieutenants in his army. We should be mistaken in thinking of these suppers as the unclean orgies they have sometimes been represented to be. Men drank deep of the wines of Aï and of Tokay, but without allowing them to get the better of their reason; the guests were noblemen who brought to the art of life inimitable spirit and vivacity.

Gracious words sprang from their lips as a flower from its calyx; and then, occasionally, at the end of the supper, they would fall to discussing serious affairs, when some momentous question was agitating their minds.

The Marquise de Pompadour possessed a wonderful aptitude not only for finance, as might be expected in view of the education she had had, in her early years, in the salon of Étioles, but also for all affairs pertaining to public administration, to the royal prerogative, and even to foreign politics. On the latter questions, the Marquise shared with the nobility their feelings of pride in the honour and dignity of their country: thus it was that she did not wholly approve of the negotiations at Aix-la-Chapelle, and, in spite of the fact that the treaty had certainly brought some glory to France, she could have wished that the chivalrous side of royalty had been better defended, and more carefully safe-

guarded. In the eyes of Madame de Pompadour the material advantages of the treaty were as nothing compared with the abandonment of Prince Edward and with the humiliating clause, added in the name of the Whigs, to the effect that 'the Pretender be persuaded to leave France, and if he did not agree to go, that he be ejected by force.' The clause had, alas! been an unfortunate stipulation on the part of the English embassy, at which the Marquise had been deeply mortified. It is not to be wondered at that a woman should understand a delicate matter of sentiment better than a mere party of statesmen.

It was at this time that she began to conceive a violent antipathy for the Marquis d'Argenson, who was so great a favourite with the King, and a councillor who was most anxious that the terms of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle should be carried out to the letter. The Marquise failed to discover in

M. d'Argenson those exalted sentiments on matters of chivalry upon which she set such store; in her eyes the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was more in favour of Prussia than France. The materialistic ideas of the English Whigs had gained too great an ascendancy to please Madame la Marquise, and M. d'Argenson had carried out the rigorous clause which stipulated for the expulsion of Charles Edward in a manner that was both tactless and indelicate. Madame had blushed for the King of France, that a prince whom Louis had addressed as 'my brother,' should be arrested, handcuffed like a common criminal, and all to fulfil the secret conditions of Aix-la-Chapelle. In the eyes of Madame de Pompadour it would have been better to have become liable to a renewal of war than employ such treacherous violence. M. d'Argenson, unfortunately, had not dared to say to the English Ambassador (as he should have done):

'Never will my master consent to employ harsh means to compel Prince Edward to leave a kingdom where he has received hospitality: rather war than that, for then at least would France show that she had not yet lost all feelings of honour.' Her interest in the fate of the unfortunate Charles Edward called forth one of the most beautiful sides of Madame de Pompadour's character. She had seen him several times before he went on his ill-fated expedition; it was she who had employed Voltaire to draw up the manifesto announcing the measures France proposed to take on behalf of the Stuart cause. She had followed each one of his successes, delighting to recount them to the King. She had shed bitter tears on hearing of his reverses, and she utterly failed to understand the cold-spirited policy that abandoned him to his fate when he was no longer successful! The Marquise de Pompadour, notwithstanding her artistic tempera-

ment, hid beneath a gay exterior lofty thoughts and very deep feeling. The adventures of the noble young prince had touched her, just as she might have been touched at the reading of a romance of chivalry, one of those wonderful legends of the Middle Ages that speak to the heart of woman. The Marquise did not go so far as to blame noble-hearted Louis XV. for his desertion, but reserved her censure for the coldly calculating Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. This minister had new-fashioned ideas on the perfection of the English Government, and the justice of the revolution of 1688. It was this episode that decided the fate of M. d'Argenson, and made his resignation only a matter of time.

There are other considerations that ought also to be taken into account: the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was favourable to Prussia, and King Louis had no love for Frederick—an egotistical,

churlish atheist, with whom he had nothing in common. It was the opinion of Louis XV. that, if only Prussia could be made auxiliary to France, the house of Brandenburg would never be able to drag France along behind it, as its auxiliary, as, indeed, Frederick II. hoped it one day might, with the help of the philosophers, poets, and pamphleteers, the plague of honest statesmen, whom he befriended and who, be it observed, were amply protected by M. d'Argenson. Two circumstances rendered the continuation of an intimate alliance with Prussia difficult: the marriage of the Dauphin, Louis XV.'s eldest son, with a Saxony princess, which was a great obstacle to Frederick's ambitions, for he coveted Saxony as he had coveted Silesia, and the reconciliation with the English, with whom Prussia had until very recently been at war. It was reported at Versailles that the Whigs were offering subsidies to Frederick on a scale even more lavish than that on

which Cardinal Richelieu had, in days gone by, subsidised the Electors of Brandenburg.

The Marquise de Pompadour soon realised that, if she wished for a change of policy, she must first of all prepare the way for the appointment of fresh advisers. She turned her attention towards the Abbé de Bernis and the Comte de Stainville. The former was not, as has been supposed, merely a charming, witty, easy-going courtier, to whom Voltaire was in the habit of dedicating verses. He was a capable and studious politician, and a keen and impartial judge of events. The Abbé de Bernis, while he preserved an inexpressible charm of conversation and manner, was thoroughly well acquainted with the equity of nations, and on several occasions, when consulted by the King on some affair of State, had replied with a logical acumen, a clearness of perception, and a knowledge of men and facts, that

could not fail to appeal to his Majesty. Madame de Pompadour suggested to the King that Bernis should be offered the ambassadorship of Venice, that hot-bed of spies and intrigue in which most of the secret plots of Europe were hatched. The decision was made without the help of M. d'Argenson. The Abbé left for Venice in the month of October, bearing with him very minute instructions from the King, who had always depended largely on personal correspondence with his ambassadors. Bernis understood the character of his mission: 'More investigation than negotiation,' and his witty and *piquante* correspondence is no more nor less than a collection of extremely interesting anecdotes. He had little extravagances of style, but in his letters we find the details of most important information—as for example the earliest intimation of Frederick's reconciliation with England, and the first draft of a subsidy treaty drawn up

by the Whigs and signed by Prussia. It was from the Saxony delegate at Venice that Bernis had this grave news, and he sent it in the midst of a crowd of amusing anecdotes on the Carnival which he had collected for the amusement of the King and Madame de Pompadour. Bernis was well aware that a true knowledge of affairs does not necessarily lie in a grave demeanour, and that an important end can be gained by a means seemingly out of harmony with that end—a means suggestive of flippancy and a love of pleasure.

While at Venice, Bernis won for himself a reputation as a first-rate diplomatist; charged to give his decision in a matter of dispute that had arisen between the Republic of Venice and his Holiness the Pope, the Abbé brought to the discussion such discretion and such consummate skill in handling the complicated pretensions of the two parties, that his judgment was unhesitatingly accepted as final.

The Holy Father and the Most Serene Republic took occasion to render thanks to the King of France for the services of his envoy. From that moment Madame de Pompadour, in her own mind, destined Bernis for a post more important still, the Department of Foreign Affairs, which M. d'Argenson could no longer fill on account of his pro-Prussian tendencies, now out-of-date, and no longer corresponding to the newer interests of the anti-Prussian party. It was, indeed, at Venice that the first overtures for a reconciliation with Austria were made by Prince de Kaunitz and the Abbé de Bernis.

The idea of an alliance with Austria was also shared by the young French ambassador at Rome, the Comte de Stainville, afterwards Duc de Choiseul. He belonged by birth to Lorraine, a province that had ever been devoted to the memory of her ancient kings. The Duc de Choiseul, like the Abbé de Bernis, had developed a profound contempt for

Prussia, as well as great repugnance towards the English. He, like all noblemen of that time, had begun his career with military service; a Colonel at Fontenoy, Field-Marshal after the campaign of 1745, he had attracted notice, apart from his ability as a soldier, by his wit and the masterliness of his official reports, which were particularly gratifying to Louis. Appointed ambassador at Rome, the Comte de Stainville stayed there for two years, and most satisfactorily performed his duties, during a difficult time of Jansenist quarrels and wordy disputes. In spite of the fact that the French ambassador was steeped in the doctrine of the new philosophy, he managed to please the Pope and the Sacred College, by reason of the sincerity and earnestness of his character. His letters to the King and Madame de Pompadour, like those of the Abbé de Bernis, were witty and full of anecdotes, and his style so easy that he

seemed to do little more than play with one serious question after another. The Duc de Choiseul had seen Prince de Kaunitz at Rome, and had entered warmly into the idea of a reconciliation with Vienna.

The real mission of the Comte de Stainville was the solution, by the help of the Holy See, of the serious difficulties that had arisen among the French clergy at the time when Pope Clement XI. issued his 'Constitution' or Bull, the famous 'Unigenitus.' In Paris, in particular, a strange ferment had arisen: nowadays, when our minds are calmer, perhaps more indifferent, it is difficult to imagine how anyone could wish to dispute the right to fix the terms of the Sacrament with bishop or archbishop. Is it not wholly a question of episcopal jurisdiction, of dogma? Confession, absolution, the Eucharist, are purely religious matters, with which the laity have no concern; and yet, at this period in our history, parliaments

pretended to a share in these questions, and enjoined upon priests and vicars the necessity of offering the Holy Sacrament unconditionally. The first condition, formerly, it must be remembered, had been the signing of a document drawn up by Monseigneur de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, that model of virtue, who was in entire submission to Rome, as, indeed, all bishops had to be who did not desire to be accused of heresy and schism.

Parliament, in this matter, knew neither restraint nor common decency; it commanded the Archbishop to revoke his formulary, under penalty of the confiscation of his temporal power, and, upon his refusing to do so, they issued an order for his arrest, to the delight of the whole of the Jansenist party. But this odious act did not receive the royal sanction: Louis XV. quashed the childish resistance of the Jansenists, and, when Parliament protested, he had recourse to severe measures, and issued

some well-merited *lettres-de-cachet*. The majority of these parliamentarians, honourable enough in private life, held political opinions that were insulting to the authority of the King, and a stumbling-block to the general progress of affairs.

VII

MADAME DE POMPADOUR AND THE AUSTRIAN ALLIANCE

(1752-1755)

THE Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, whatever the solemnity of its terms and the gravity of its clauses, was, in the minds of certain of the powers who signed it, no more than a truce which could be broken at the earliest opportunity; England, for example, officially on good terms with France, countenanced the continuance of hostilities in India and Canada, both by land and sea, hostilities

that the English ambassador took care to deny: the treaty was, moreover, attacked in Parliament daily, and its popularity seriously questioned in the Opposition newspapers.

King Frederick of Prussia, in his turn, was not completely satisfied with the terms of the treaty; at the conclusion of peace he found that his projects had been but imperfectly realised. Frederick, with his ardent spirit, his rich treasury, and his powerful army, found himself narrowly hemmed in by the limits fixed by the treaty, and eagerly looked forward to the day when he might stir up Germany and go forth to win new lands for the enrichment of his country. He had already arrived at a secret understanding with England, when he proceeded to win over the support of what was at that time a very considerable force, the philosophic party, who knew so well how to prepare the way for new enterprises, no matter how strange or revolutionary.

The Calvinist and the Jansenist refugees at London, Amsterdam, and Berlin, bore an undying hatred to their country and their king: and the part they played during the wars of the eighteenth century in stirring up the enemies of France can only be described as infamous. Voltaire boldly placed himself at the head of this faction, and sold himself, body and soul, to the King of Prussia. He now no longer fawned and flattered at the shrine of Madame de Pompadour, nor paced the groves and thickets of Bellevue composing verses in her name with a true poet's frenzy; his enthusiasm had grown calmer and more restrained. There were several reasons for this: in the first place, Voltaire could not suffer a rival in Crébillon, nor endure the thought of the favour which had been bestowed upon the aged poet; in the second, he had hoped for a post in the Department for Foreign Affairs; through the influence of M. d'Argenson

and the Marquise de Pompadour he had been attached to this department in the capacity of clerk, and had been given several tasks of an important and confidential nature. But, later, Voltaire was unable to obtain all he asked for, and retired, in high dudgeon, to Cirey, to the consoling arms of Madame du Châtelet (the dull and plain Emilie), where he underwent the fresh humiliation of being deserted for a handsome young officer of dragoons, Saint-Lambert, poet and philosopher like himself.

Madame du Châtelet used to reside for part of the year at the Court of King Stanislas — a virtuous prince, but by then extremely old and feeble— whose Court had ever been the refuge of philosophers. The fault of all the pupils of the Jesuits, of all the princes who had, at some time in their lives, come under their influence, had always been a weakness for tolerance and freedom of speech, which opened the

way to broad views and unbridled opinions such as had far better never have been propagated. To attribute to them the inflexibility in judgment that was the characteristic of the Jansenists is the greatest mistake a historian can make. At the Court of Stanislas, therefore, there reigned a spirit of kindness and sympathy towards genius and intellect, in whatever form it might present itself, and a gallantry, which made the fortune and the reputation of Madame de Boufflers and of Madame du Châtelet alike. It was at this Court, after the death of his faithless Emilie, that Voltaire definitely entered the service of the King of Prussia, on the following conditions: that he should receive the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit, the office of Chamberlain, and the promise of a barony with an income of 20,000 francs attached to the title. Thus Voltaire, but lately gentleman in waiting to King Louis XV., became Chamberlain to the

King of Prussia, and we may be sure that he very soon became a prey to all the petty passions and all the implacable enmities that French refugees were so prone to feel against their mother country. It was at Berlin that Voltaire, fêted and made much of by Frederick, who had long wished to gather this great man into his household, completed his shameless and most unpatriotic poem, the '*Pucelle d'Orleans*,' which was written solely for the purpose of doing honour to the English. Into this poem—in accordance with the policy of Prussia, which wished for nothing so much as the overthrow of Madame de Pompadour—Voltaire went so far as to introduce some disgraceful and insulting lines against his former protectress. These lines, witty enough in themselves, could only have been dictated by the basest ingratitude. The little party of refugees at Berlin could freely indulge their wit against their country and

their king: at the suppers of Sans-Souci the epithet '*Cotillon deux*' was invented and given to Madame de Pompadour, and the accusation that the alliance between France and Austria was chiefly owing to the gracious letters that Maria-Theresa addressed to her whom she was pleased to call her cousin, the Marquise de Pompadour, was spread throughout Europe by unscrupulous pamphleteers.

Such was not really the state of affairs at all; the alliance between France and Austria was the result of a carefully thought-out policy, and it was not concluded until after the commencement of hostilities on the part of the English against our fleet and our colonies, and the conclusion of an alliance between Frederick and the Whigs. It is necessary to make a very careful survey of the facts to realise with what precaution the cabinet of Vienna and that of Versailles proceeded, and what masterly statesmanship was

displayed on both sides in order to cope with a situation that England and Prussia had brought upon themselves by an unjust war, begun without any preliminary declaration whatsoever. The following are the diplomatic conventions signed between France and Austria before the declaration of war.

1. On the 1st of May 1756 a neutrality treaty was concluded on these terms: 'The peace of Europe being troubled by the disputes dividing France and England, the Empress Queen declares that she will take no part, neither directly nor indirectly, in the aforesaid disputes, but that she will observe a strict neutrality during the whole time that the war shall last.' This is the first treaty.

2. On the same day (1st May 1756) a secret convention was signed, of which the terms were these: 'Nevertheless, if, on the occasion of the said war, other powers besides England join in the attack, even under pretext of

auxiliaries, against any of the provinces held by his Very Christian Majesty in Europe, her Majesty, Empress and Queen, will take it upon herself to defend the same, and further, if the Dominions of her Majesty, Empress and Queen, should be attacked on the Continent, his Very Christian Majesty will be obliged to defend and protect them.'

It was, therefore, upon a perfectly equal footing that France and Austria treated with one another. Kept informed by their respective ambassadors of all that was happening, the two Courts had full knowledge of the treaty of alliance that had lately been concluded between England and Prussia (15th January 1756) and of the subsidies that had been paid by England to Frederick. 'His Majesty of England promises and pledges himself to pay every year, as long as the present war shall last, forty thousand pounds to his Majesty of Prussia, to enable him

to deal roundly with his enemies. And further, his Majesty of England promises to despatch to the Baltic a squadron of four ships of the line and several frigates. He promises, besides, to harass the coasts of France and the Low Countries, to the end that he may make a diversion in favour of his Majesty of Prussia.' The conditions of the treaty between France and Austria thus corresponded with those of the Anglo-Prussian alliance.

The existence of these diplomatic documents completely alters the complexion of affairs, and gives us an insight into the true origin of the Seven Years' War. France and Austria cannot be accused of having taken the initiative: for the commencement of hostilities we must look to England and the Prussians. The cabinets of Vienna and Versailles only entered into friendly relations because England and Prussia were disturbing the peace.

This alliance was soon extended to other powers. No sooner had Frederick, in accordance with the terms of the treaty he had concluded with England, invaded Silesia, than the articles of a quadruple alliance were signed at St Petersburg, by the Marquis de Châteauneuf for France, Count Esterhazy for Austria, Baron Posso for Sweden and Count Voronsow for Russia. It was, therefore, a splendid triumph for French diplomacy; what could be better than for France to enter into an alliance with the three great military powers of the Continent—Russia, Austria and Sweden—at the moment when England was about to commence hostilities. The wording of the treaty was in very lofty strain; the King of Prussia was looked upon as a common disturber of the peace, and each of the four powers was urged to enter upon the war vigorously, and not to look upon the task as finished until King Frederick was reduced, and no longer

able to be a cause of trouble or anxiety to other nations.

The philosophers and men of letters who had sold themselves to the King of Prussia denounced this treaty as iniquitous and unjust; and yet it has been several times referred to in history, and will be again, as an example of a far-sighted policy, and a masterly attempt to frustrate the princes who were endeavouring to alter the geography of the European nations. It was at this time, too, that France and Austria signed a series of military conventions, which were followed by territorial indemnities: 'His Most Christian Majesty takes into his pay a corps of 4000 Bavarians, 3000 Wurtembergers, and 7000 Saxons, and will pay, besides, to Austria an annual subsidy of 12,000,000 francs, for the maintenance of an army of 100,000 men who should always be available; in consideration of which, as soon as her Majesty, Empress and Queen, shall

have retaken possession of Silesia and the county of Glatz, she pledges herself to cede to France the sovereignty of Chimay, Beaumont, the towns and harbours of Ostend and Newport, the towns of Ypres, Furnes and Mons, and a league of territory surrounding these said towns, and, further, she will cede all the remaining territory of the Low Countries to the Infante Don Philip of Bourbon, Prince of Parma, reserving for herself only a voice in the Diet, the advowson gifts of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and the arms and titles of the house of Bourgogne.' A second treaty assured France of the reversion of the Low Countries, after the death of Don Philip of Bourbon, who was to assume the title of Grand Duke of the Netherlands. The terms of the treaty were very similar to those which assured France of Lorraine. To the towns and districts promised him in the convention, Belgium was added by Louis XV.

Thus we see that those statesmen who negotiated this alliance were inspired by very serious and very lofty aims. The treaties must remain for ever a lasting tribute to the greatness and clear-sightedness of Madame de Pompadour, if as has been said, she really inspired them. By the terms of the alliance France was assured of help from Austria in the event of an unexpected attack from Great Britain; the cabinet of Versailles would have the ascendency over Saxony, Bavaria, and Wurtemburg; Austria would make concession to France of a new frontier to the Low Countries, which should extend from Ostend as far as the sovereignty of Chimay; and, lastly, the whole of Belgium would revert to France on the death of the Infante, the Duke of Parma.

It was therefore not altogether without aim or object, nor without stipulating for certain material advantages, that Versailles undertook to support

and maintain the contingents of the Circles of Bavaria, Saxony and Wurtemburg; it was agreed: 'That if, in the course of the war, the German powers are satisfied with the indemnities derived from Prussian territory, which have so greatly increased since 1715, the said powers pledge themselves to yield to France those territories which they hold on the left bank of the Rhine, reserving only certain episcopal rights over them." It was, I repeat, a similar policy to that which assured to France the possession and reversion of Lorraine, a policy of union of territory which was much favoured by Louis XV. The treaties were, therefore, not the result of fancy or idle caprice, nor yet of a few flattering words addressed to Madame de Pompadour by the Empress Maria-Theresa. They were prepared by statesmen of exceptional talent, signed by the Abbé de Bernis and Prince Kaunitz in the interests of the two

parties to the contract, and, further, sanctioned by the quadruple alliance with Russia and Sweden.

And yet there have not been wanting men, even serious historians, who have railed at the far-seeing policy of the treaty of 1756 as being the work of a petticoat diplomacy and an enervated cabinet. The writers of the eighteenth century, led by the philosophers who had sold themselves to the King of Prussia, and who became attached to England through the instrumentality of the Protestant refugees, have added much gross stupidity to the history of their country, pretentious enough as it already was. The King of Prussia was not only a military genius of the first rank; he had, besides, this admirable trait in his character—the power of stirring up all that was mean and despicable in the philosophers and writers and refugees who had grouped themselves round his throne, and using it to his own ends. Surrounded by atheists,

who preferred to adopt the name of freethinkers, Frederick II. could, with the help of their malicious pens, disfigure the true facts, and impose his opinions upon the rest of Europe. He corresponded with Voltaire, d'Alembert, d'Holbach, Helvétius, not so much from esteem and admiration for their talents, as from the fact that, by the help of their writings and their flattery, he held the proud position of lord of the world of ideas.

The King of Prussia, acting in conjunction with England, had commenced hostilities and carried disorder into Germany; the fact is undeniable. And yet the philosophers in his pay were clever enough to represent the aggressive monarch as the victim of the ambition and injustice of France, Russia, Sweden and Austria. Frederick II. had proclaimed Voltaire King of Philosophers. In his turn Voltaire declared the King of Prussia to be a second Titus, a Marcus Aurelius, exposed to the in-

justice and ingratitude of certain of the powers of Europe, and that at the very moment when he was endeavouring to deprive the King of Saxony of his throne. Such was the power of men of letters at that time, that this war, a national war and one that should have been advantageous to France, was rendered unpopular from its origin. It met with opposition everywhere. France failed to bring to it that strength and energy, without which no great enterprise can ever succeed, because she listened to the dangerous views of philosophers who were in the pay of England and Prussia.

VIII

LOUIS XV. AND HIS PARLIAMENTS

(1750-1756)

FRANCE was about to enter upon a war of considerable importance, and those who had any pretensions to loyalty

at all could not but hope for generous assistance from Parliament, in the shape of liberal supplies.

The Parliament of Paris (more especially the Grand Chamber) was composed of ancient and powerful families, traditionally loyal and devoted to the Crown, but very importunate in their pretensions to a share in the government. They honoured their lord the King—indeed, they almost worshipped him on bended knee—but at the same time the parliamentarians formed themselves into a compact body for the purpose of putting every obstacle they could in the way of the exercise of his authority. The King was proclaimed all powerful, holding his crown from God, and yet his ruling was questioned on all matters, whether religious, political, or civil. It is often in the minor incidents of the history of a country that the explanation of revolution is to be found; the young party in Parliament no longer pre-

served the traditions of the Grand Chamber; in their parliamentary commissions and their petitions to the King, it is not difficult to trace the influence of the constitution of England: the dukes and peers who had seats in Parliament hoped to become Lords of the High Chamber; the clergy dreamed of ecclesiastical peerages; others again aspired to transforming the Chamber altogether into an English Commons. To this end some of the bolder spirits conceived the idea of the union of all the parliaments into a single whole, which, great body as it then would be, would be a counterpoise to royal authority, as in England.

These notions had been brought into fashion by the writings of a certain magistrate belonging to the Parliament of Bordeaux, a man of doubtful scholarship, with an affected, though witty style, the President Secondat de Montesquieu. He had started his literary career by his now famous

'*Lettres Persanes*,' in which he speaks disrespectfully of every existing institution. The book gave him a certain amount of popularity with the philosophic party, and, after having perpetrated the '*Temple de Gnide*,' he published his '*Esprit des Lois*,' a work which has met with most extravagant praise. It might almost be termed a metereological almanac of the institutions of the people. President Montesquieu, in his barometric philosophy, has been at pains to prove that a nation is fitted for liberty or for servitude according as to whether its climate is cold or hot: truly a strange thesis, and one which is contrary to all fact and all experience, for Sparta and Rome in ancient times and, in the Middle Ages, Spain and the Republics of Italy were all situated in the warm and sunny south, while, on the other hand, for absolute sovereignty we have only to go to the north, to the divine daughters of Odin; if it be true that

the burning sun enervates, can it not also be said that the cold benumbs us?

Montesquieu's learned treatises, in which he proved everything by his ever-recurring phrase: '*les faits par les faits mêmes, les actes par les actes mêmes*,' enjoyed a great success among the educated and well-to-do classes. The author of these little catch phrases, with his unbounded admiration for all English institutions, and his theory of the balance of power, entered wholeheartedly into the new ideas of the parliaments, and justified their ambition and their opposition to Royal Authority. We have already seen how this opposition had displayed itself in the matter of the sacraments, and how his Grace the Archbishop of Paris had been called before the bar to answer the charges laid at his door by the parliamentarians. Without fully agreeing with the principles laid down in the bull Unigenitus, the King's Council had been compelled to declare that no Par-

liament had a right to suspend the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Paris.

The Jansenist party in Parliament caused considerable disturbance by repeatedly placing themselves at the head of the Opposition: the King might have tolerated this if the Jansenists had confined themselves to ecclesiastical disputes, but when it came to fiscal matters, to the voting of supplies and the levying of new taxes or the increasing of taxes already in existence, their opposition became unbearable, for it arrested the proper administration of authority. Parliamentarians who displayed so much care and foresight in their dealings with money when it was a matter of voting a certain sum for the King's use, or for the necessities of the State, were for the most part greedy, rapacious speculators, who had enriched themselves by Law's System or by judicious and wealthy marriages, to which they owed

their large fortunes and their fine estates. President Molé had received 1,800,000 francs from Samuel Bernard when he married his daughter; Lamoignon de Malesherbes, a man of an extremely arbitrary character, who scoffed at all creeds, was joined in marriage to the daughter of Grimod de la Reynière, one of the very richest of all the *fermiers-généraux*. Certainly there was no crime in such unions: Gros-Bois, as well as Champlâtreux and Maisons, came from the financiers, and they were as well obtained through marriage alliances as otherwise. But what was not really the lawful concern of parliamentarians at all was their fierce and obstinate opposition to everything in the nature of a new tax; surely the levying of taxes is a legitimate means of meeting a public crisis or the ordinary needs of the Treasury.

The only way in which the Court could defend itself against such op-

position was to hold a '*lit de justice*,' and, after that, to send the opposing party into exile. The most recalcitrant of these mischief-making magistrates were chosen, those who, true imitators of the Fronde, preferred notoriety to obscurity. In the evening, at a meeting of the Council, the *lettres-de-cachet* were signed, with more discretion and discernment than is generally admitted, and the musketeers received their orders. Next morning, at cock-crow, two Guardsmen were sent to the house of every magistrate who had received the sentence of banishment, to carry out the orders of the Council. The place of exile varied: to the most guilty were assigned far-distant provinces—towns or villages situated at the top of a mountain range; some were even shut up in State prisons—in the Château of Pierre-en-Cise, or the islands of St. Marguerite. But the majority were simply despatched to their castles, to the bosom of their

families, with permission to correspond with whom they liked.

Parliament replied to these acts of rigour by remonstrance, suspension of justice, and even threats of resignation! In regard to the remonstrances, the parliamentarians were, to a certain extent, within their rights; but the passing of a decree for the suspension of justice when a political matter was at issue was a demonstration of the inherent viciousness of a system which placed constitutional opposition in the hands of the lawyers, who were only really concerned in the administration of justice. The result was that many a lawsuit suffered in those days during a political debate. Finally, with regard to the oft-repeated threats of resignation, men began to ask themselves whether it would not be better to accept resignation at the hands of the Opposition and form an entirely new Parliament, which might be more inclined to attend to its own duties

and less likely to disturb the even tenor of the State.

The Marquise de Pompadour was naturally called upon to settle these questions, and, on the impartial testimony of a president who was of the Opposition party, we are enabled to judge of the dignity and practical knowledge that she brought to bear upon the difficulties that confronted her. President Meynières, of the *chambre des enquêtes*, begged an audience with the Marquise de Pompadour. M. Durey de Meynières was the leader of one of the most turbulent sections of the Assembly; he had a son in the Guards, for whom he was anxious to obtain advancement. King Louis had persistently refused to grant it, for the very good reason that, whereas a government owes justice to every subject of the realm, it only accords favours to those who serve it with loyalty and devotion. Repulsed with some severity, President Meynières

demanded an audience with the Marquise, who received him eagerly. The details of the interview have fortunately been preserved for us by Meynières himself, who, in his account, can hardly be accused of favouring Madame de Pompadour.

The audience was held in one of the smaller rooms at Versailles; the Marquise was standing by the fire, leaning her elbow upon the chimney-piece: the President, on whom she cast a haughty glance, made a deep obeisance. After a few respectful words of greeting he ventured, with extreme humility, to make known his request: 'I know only too well, madame, that I have had the misfortune to displease the King, but I am unable to divine the cause of my disgrace.' To these words, which could hardly be considered sincere, the Marquise replied quickly: 'What, Monsieur le Président, you do not know? Think for a moment: have you not been informed in what way you have displeased

the King?' 'No, madame, I have not, and I am quite at a loss.' 'You have no friend who might have told you?' 'On the contrary, madame, I must have friends, for it is through them that I have been permitted to pay my court to you; but not one of them has ever told me the cause of my disgrace.' 'Verily a strange state of affairs! Well!' continued the Marquise, with a gracious smile, 'the cause of your disgrace is due to your own merits, your own knowledge and capabilities. You are the originator of most of the Acts that have lately emanated from Parliament; the King knows this and does not forget.'

The president, who was somewhat abashed at so lively a reproach, and yet a little flattered, excused himself as best he could: 'In any case,' said he, 'if I have been so unfortunate as to displease the King, it is hardly a sufficient reason for closing my son's career at the outset.' 'The King is master,' re-

plied Madame de Pompadour; 'if he does not consider this a fitting occasion for making you, personally, the mark of his discontent, he visits it on you through the medium of your son, by refusing him special favour. For all that I am sorry for you, and nothing would please me more than to be able to render you some service. You know, for instance, that the King, at this moment, desires to receive certain marks of submission from those gentlemen in Parliament who have tendered their resignation; several of them have already written him letters full of respect and submission; if you were to write one yourself, and persuade several others to do the same, you would be rendering us valuable service, and I would hasten to make it appear so in the eyes of the King. What shall I say to his Majesty?—that I saw M. de Meynières to-day, and he assured me of his most dutiful respect for your person? The King would make an-

swer: "What has he done to prove it?" "Nothing"; and there the matter would end.'

President Meynières endeavoured to prove that such a step on his part was impossible, and that opposition was necessary to maintain the honour of Parliament. At this (the president goes on to say in his narrative) Madame de Pompadour saw fit to smile, and, 'with wonderful eloquence' (these are the president's own words) said to him: 'It always astonishes me when I hear of this so-called honour of Parliament. It is made the reason for not doing the King's will, or carrying out his orders, and men never seem to consider that true honour lies in fulfilling one's duty towards the State, and in putting down the disturbances that are bound to arise when justice is in default. The honour of Parliament consists, sir, in recognising wherein it has been in the wrong, wherein it has been fickle and headstrong. That I hold the

magistracy in very high esteem, there can be no doubt whatever; there is nothing I would not give to be spared the necessity for speaking against so august a tribunal, a court upon which poets and men of letters are never backward in heaping praise. And yet it is this court, this wise and learned court, that is for ever wishing to set the Government right, and in a short quarter of an hour is carried so far as to be obliged to adopt the extreme measure of resignation on the part of all its members! And you sent in your resignation, Monsieur de Meynières, at the same time as these madmen, and now you make a point of honour of continuing to associate yourself with them! Rather the very realm should perish than your honour be sullied! Ah, Monsieur de Meynières, yours is not the honour of a loyal subject of the King, nor even of a citizen who is attached to his country.'

President Meynières then goes on to

confess that, dazzled by this display of eloquence, he replied that it was impossible to hope for a reconciliation until after its rights were restored to Parliament, the exiles recalled, and their resignations accepted.

'So, Monsieur le Président,' continued Madame de Pompadour, in a voice rendered more charming than ever by the depth of her feelings, 'the State must perish, because the King will not give back to Parliament a handful of exiled agitators. If your opposition is to last, the King will have to break the promises made to his allies, and there will be an end to the payment of pensions, of the soldiers' pay and the sums necessary for the general maintenance of the army. You see to what a pass you are bringing your country; and yet you remain deaf to all entreaty, indifferent to every catastrophe: have not those members of Parliament who have tendered their resignation *ipso facto* voluntarily ab-

dicated their duties? The King may, therefore, accept such resignations as he pleases, and grant pardon to the rest; he need do no more than that.'

'Grant pardon! Madame, the expression is surely too harsh; one grants pardon to criminals, and we are not that.'

'What I have said, Monsieur le Président, is harsh, I admit; but I am only a woman, not a chancellor; when those address you who have the right to do so, they carefully weigh their words, lest the request that is to be put before the magistracy should suffer in any way from being badly expressed. But before everything it is necessary that the King's honour should be maintained.'

'Ah! madame, what eloquence! Would that I had such eloquence, and with it could subjugate the Chambers. But this is not the first occasion upon which the two Chambers have ceased to act: there was a similar

occurrence in the reign of Henri IV., when there was nothing done from the 20th of March to the 6th of June.' 'And were some of the members in exile at that time, Monsieur le Président?' 'One, only, Councillor de la Rodière, whom the King considered a madman, and who was restored to his party before the 6th of June.'

'A fine thing for Henri IV., truly!' replied the Marquise, with a mocking laugh. '. . . The King is far too kind—it is his good nature that makes you so impertinent and so hard to please. But sooner or later he will grow weary of his kindness and wish to be master once more. Do not, as you are so prone to do, attribute to his ministers the King's own personal feelings of resentment. We are not now concerned with his ministers at all: it is the King who has been wounded and who has made up his mind that he will be obeyed. . . . But I would ask you gentlemen of Parliament, who are you

that you dare to oppose your wishes to those of the King, as you do? Do you think Louis XV. not so great a prince as Louis XIV. Or that the Parliament of to-day is composed of members of greater worth and more importance than the last? Ah! I only wish they were! Let them look to it that they at least resemble the members of the former Parliament! But consider for a moment what Parliament has been from 1673, after Louis XIV. removed the remonstrators, until 1713, and tell me if ever Parliament was more important or more worthy of consideration. Why should you gentlemen of to-day think it extraordinary that you should be subjected to the ruling of 1667?'

So wise and admirable a speech, coming from the mouth of a beautiful and accomplished woman, astonished the President so much that, in an unguarded moment, he let fall the remark: 'The truth is that at that time, madame, they did not dare.'

'How! did not dare, Monsieur de Meynières? They did not dare, while you, you gentlemen of to-day, you do dare to oppose your King—is that it? Do you then think that the King will prove less powerful, less resolute in action than his great-grandfather? They did not dare, indeed! Ah! mon Dieu, what an expression! I know that that is what you gentlemen of Parliament really think, but there are few who care to confess it, and I am sorry to learn, from your own words, Monsieur le Président, that such is your opinion.' At the end of this discourse, adds M. de Meynières, Madame la Marquise dismissed me with a few polite words of farewell, leaving me full of wonder and admiration. Such is M. de Meynières' own account of the interview, the account of an eye-witness, a serious magistrate, a member of the Opposition, and an adversary of the interests of Madame de Pompadour. He realised that the honours lay with

the Marquise, and indeed, throughout this period, the behaviour of Parliament was entirely lacking in any semblance of dignity. At a critical moment, when the nation was about to embark on a war with no less a power than England, while the nobles and the people were marching loyally beneath their country's flag, the parliaments threw themselves heart and soul into a narrow policy of opposition and obstruction, and even carried their economical views so far that they refused to vote the necessary supplies.

The intelligence of the Marquise was indeed extraordinary! It is no longer the artist, nor even the brave woman putting courage into the hearts of those who are on the eve of battle, but the serious-minded civilian, the State politician who discusses the Crown's prerogatives, defends them eloquently, and establishes relations with the parliaments, that we see; and to these debates she brings a tactfulness, a

sense of fitness and a lofty point of view calculated to astonish a president of a Chamber!

IX

DIPLOMACY AND WAR

(1756-1758)

It was no longer possible to hesitate between peace and war. The English, in supreme contempt of the lawful rights of nations, had commenced hostilities on land, in Canada, and at sea, against the French standard, while the King of Prussia had invaded Germany with an enterprising boldness that was the chief characteristic of Frederick's military genius. The time had therefore come for the carrying out of the conditions contained in the treaties of alliance, and for making preparations for war. The Council met together and proceeded very solemnly

to examine the various plans of campaign submitted to them.

The master spirit in this Council of War was Marshal Belle-Isle, the head of the Fouquet family, an old soldier, but still young in courage and resource, and the friend of Madame de Pompadour. He had been through all the campaigns from 1743 to 1747; for this tried veteran the Marquise hoped to obtain the post of head of the War Department. We owe to Marshal Belle-Isle most of the military institutions of this period, and the introduction into the army of fresh bodies of troops, such as the Hungarians or Pandours, the Uhlans or German Lancers, and the Hussars—irregular troops whose cool daring gave life and vigour to the heavy cavalry. It is said that of the French army at least a third part was composed of foreign soldiers: Swiss, Irish, Scots, Germans, Corsicans and Italians were all to be found in its ranks. The practice of employing mercenaries

was advantageous, as it lessened the demand that would otherwise have been made, in time of war, on the cultivators of the soil. These troops of mercenaries, clad in their native costume, recalled the great days of the Italian wars of the Middle Ages; recalled the reiters and lansquenets who had fought so bravely in the campaigns of the sixteenth century.

The war upon which Louis was about to enter would have to be both offensive and defensive. When called upon to take up arms and do battle with the English, Marshal Belle-Isle proposed the formation of an army in Normandy, of which he would himself take command, composed of seventy battalions, forty squadrons of horse, and a formidable artillery. Its destination was England, upon whose shores a bold attack was to be made. Inasmuch as the English were in their turn threatening Bretagne, with a view to profiting by the spirit of discontent and sedition that

was rife there, the Council, at the suggestion of Madame de Pompadour, appointed the Duc d'Aiguillon, cousin of Marshal Richelieu, to the command of that proud province, which had always had leanings towards rebellion. The Duc d'Aiguillon was granted full power to call out the militia and convoke the nobility in the event of an invasion on the part of the English. This officer, a man of distinction and great strength of character, but withal amiable, kindly, and courteous, was admirably suited to the task of repressing sedition or rebellion, while at the same time, by his brave mien and noble bearing, it was not unlikely that he would succeed in stirring up the Bretonne noblesse to a true sense of their position. Ardent and full of courage they certainly were, but unfortunately they had fallen under the influence of Parliament, and were led by a handful of enthusiasts, members of the Parliament of Rennes, at the head

of whom was a certain advocate-general of the name of La Chalotais, a very fine speaker. When at any time they were preparing to make a loyal stand against the enemy he, La Chalotais, would turn them from their purpose by a shower of epigrams and punning verses, or by some moving speech on such irrelevant questions as the sacraments and the prerogatives of the Crown.

The Council was convinced of the advisability of carrying on the war in the greatest secrecy, and resolved to despatch an expedition of considerable importance to the waters of the Mediterranean, for the purpose of gaining possession of the island of Minorca. The command of this expedition was entrusted to the Duc de Richelieu. It is stated, by the memoir writers of the day, that this command was given to Richelieu in spite of the Marquise de Pompadour, and strongly against her wishes; but this is an error to which every letter of Marshal Richelieu to the

Marquise gives the lie direct. Madame de Pompadour, who rejoiced heartily over every success gained by the French armies, was never at any time at variance with the Duc de Richelieu, from the beginning of the war until the marauding campaign in Hanover and the famous convention of Closterseven, in 1757, so strongly disapproved of by the Marquise. Richelieu was far too experienced a courtier to allow himself to become estranged from the Marquise, whose influence with the King was becoming daily more marked; and no one appreciated better than he the superior powers of mind of which Madame de Pompadour was the happy possessor.

To the King personally, and to the friendliness of the Marquise, we must also attribute the choice of the Prince de Soubise to be commander-in-chief of the auxiliaries who were despatched to render assistance to the Germans of the Circles. A delightful personality, a valiant soldier, the companion-at-

arms of Marshal Saxe, M. de Soubise was, nevertheless, eyed with a certain suspicion and jealousy by the Court on account of the friendship extended to him by the King and Madame de Pompadour. By his side, with the title of Field-Marshal, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, was Claude-Louis-César d'Estrées, equally charming and attractive, the same who was in command of the King's Household at Fontenoy. Louis XV. had but lately raised him to the rank of Field-Marshal.

The American colonies, which were being threatened by the English, and the possessions of France in India, were confided to two officers, both of whom were soldiers of exceptional ability: the Marquis de Montcalm was appointed to Canada and the Comte de Lally to India. The latter was assisted by an officer who was an active and energetic worker and extremely fertile in schemes and resources, one Dupleix. The choice

of distinguished men such as these is enough to show how absurd was the slanderous charge brought against Madame de Pompadour, that the various appointments had been made by favour and were due to caprice on the part of the Marquise rather than individual merit. There was not one of these general officers who was not a man of distinction and tried valour: the parliamentary writers had praise for Marshal Broglie alone, because the Opposition destined him sooner or later for a political rôle, that of leading the Parliament in the event of their breaking openly into revolt. For the other generals, favoured by Madame de Pompadour, they had only mockery and contempt.

At the outset of the campaign France was not without honour: Marshal Richelieu was completely successful in his expedition against Minorca, and Port Mahon was taken. The armies of Germany, under Marshal d'Estrées,

won several important battles, ably seconded by their Russian and Austrian allies. When Richelieu went to replace Marshal d'Estrées in Hanover, the English, driven back as far as Closter-seven, incontinently laid down their arms. The Marquise was proud of her choice of officers, and proud and happy at their successes. Good news reached her on all sides, for things were going equally well in Canada. The Comte de Lally and Dupleix were doing wonders in India, and the chivalrous Marquise dreamed of a descent upon England and simultaneously a rising on the part of Scotland in favour of Prince Edward. Some thought that the King ought to place himself at the head of his army, as he had done at Fontenoy, in 1745. But after careful consideration he decided against his leading the army in person, for the following reasons. It was observed that the war was not being waged entirely against external and foreign powers, and that the French

territory was liable to an attack at any part of the coast. It was, therefore, essential that the King should remain at the heart of his kingdom, ready to convey help to Normandy or Brittany or wherever the English fleet came into view. Nor was it to be forgotten that the situation in France itself was very precarious, and that at any moment she might be in the throes of a revolution. The Council were of the opinion that the King ought to remain at the centre of the movement, at Versailles, Marly, or Choisy, and direct the progress of the war from one or other of those places.

The whole of this period is covered by an animated and graphic correspondence carried on between the Marquise and Marshals Richelieu, Soubise, Broglie, and d'Estrées. The former was full of enthusiasm and delight whenever the news of success came to her ears; throughout the war it was always her aim to preserve har-

mony between the various generals in command. The first misunderstanding with Marshal Richelieu arose out of the Convention of Closterseven: not that the Marquise accused him of having treated with his foes for money, for such an act would have been entirely foreign to the loyal Marshal's ideas of duty; but she considered that he had set too much reliance on the word of an enemy, the Duke of Cumberland, in time of war; and his overweening confidence had compromised the army of the Prince de Soubise. It appears, from the private correspondence of Marshal Richelieu with Pâris-Duverney (published in 1757), that the former became mixed up with lucrative treaties concerning provisions and certain financial transactions not acknowledged at Court, and this explains the nature of the disgrace that compelled Richelieu to seek refuge in his own governorship of Guienne. During his residence in Bordeaux his correspon-

dence with the Marquise naturally ceased. King Louis was never known to have disgraced a Richelieu; he knew too well how much the Royal Family owed to the great Cardinal, and, moreover, he was convinced that a Richelieu would never, on any provocation, set at naught the sacred principle of absolute power, that axiom which France had borrowed from Roman law: 'The King is Master in his Kingdom.'

Disorders of this nature, necessitating the disgrace of certain prominent persons, occasioned some delay in the progress of affairs, and gave rise to a noticeable want of unity among the generals. It is, however, important to remember that the preparations for the war of 1756, which has so often been attributed to the Marquise de Pompadour, had been made on a very large scale, and with great forethought. Both land and sea forces were at the outset put on a strong and firm basis: sixty-seven ships of the line, forty-four

frigates and 80,000 expert seamen comprised the sea force; the land armies were made up of more than 200,000 soldiers, without reckoning the militia from the provinces. Every contingency was foreseen and provided for, in spite of the unpatriotic opposition of Parliament. The fact that Madame de Pompadour was on remarkably good terms with the great financiers was particularly helpful to the Treasury when expenses had to be met. Among the Marquise's old friends we ought especially to mention the financier Pâris-Duverney, by this time an old man, who was placed at the head of the army and navy contractors; he was a man of remarkable gifts, the third of the four brothers Pâris who had rendered the State such good service at the time of the campaign of Marshal Villars, at the end of the reign of Louis XIV. Under the ministry of the Duc de Bourbon, the friend of the Marquise de Prie, Pâris-Duverney had been

largely responsible for the liquidation of Law's notorious company, an operation of the greatest difficulty. After the campaign of 1745, in which he had already acted as army contractor, Madame de Pompadour caused him to be summoned to the Council of State. A man of great initiative and activity, his long experience with the troops had given him an insight into the science of strategy, and in his correspondence with Richelieu he displays considerable knowledge of the details of a great campaign. Pâris-Duverney, in conjunction with the *fermiers-généraux*, provided everything needed for the war of 1756, and made such advances as were rendered necessary by the stubborn opposition of Parliament. At the King's Council it was Pâris who put forward the theory that a tax became due as soon as the edict was published, and that it was not necessary to wait for the vote of Parliament. Pâris-Duverney became the Minister of Finance

under Madame de Pompadour, who was herself so capable and so gifted as an administrator. The Marquise had become the King's intermediary, his charming man-of-business, and acted for him in all negotiations incident on the war. The financiers were all friends of her family: the Lenormands occupied all the principal places in the Treasury; any necessary advances of money were made by them, at four or five per cent. interest; they were rewarded by being allowed to gather for their own purposes from the regular taxes of the realm a sum sufficient to cover the amounts they had advanced.

X

PUBLIC DISCONTENT—ATTEMPT ON THE KING'S LIFE BY DAMIENS

(1756-1757)

In the midst of this activity on the part of the Marquise de Pompadour,

this period of whole-hearted devotion to the King and the State, an event of dire and sinister omen occurred, which for the time arrested the progress of her influence and completely shattered her power. On the 5th of January 1757, at half-past four in the afternoon, a man hurled himself upon the King, as he was standing at the foot of the great staircase at Versailles, and with a sudden, abrupt movement of his arm dealt him a blow in the left side with a penknife. Neither the King's Bodyguard nor his Swiss Guard was able to arrest the arm of the fanatic: their captain, the Duc d'Ayen, was completely taken by surprise. The King was about to set out on a visit to Trianon, according to his usual custom, to see his daughters, one of whom, Madame Victoire, was ailing at the time; in spite of all the errors of his sinful life, Louis XV. preserved a profound respect for the members of his family; he was especially fond of his daughters.

When he was struck he remarked, with extraordinary coolness: 'Someone has run his elbow into me,' and putting his hand to his side he saw that blood was flowing from a wound near his heart. 'I am wounded,' he continued, still preserving a calm demeanour; 'let them look to Monsieur le Dauphin.' From these words we may suppose that the King either had knowledge of a plot against the monarchy, or that he feared that such a conspiracy was only too likely. He pointed out the would-be assassin with the same coolness that he displayed throughout the unfortunate occurrence: 'That is the man who struck the blow,' said he, and those standing by threw themselves furiously upon him. He would have been put to death upon the spot had not the King suggested that it might be desirable to question him as to his reasons for attempting so serious a crime. The Provost immediately summoned a meeting for the purpose in

the Hôtel de Ville. In answer to the first question that was put to him, the assassin declared his name to be Robert-François Damiens; he denied all complicity with other criminals. When questioned as to the motive of his crime he replied 'that he had not intended to kill the King, but to give him a sharp lesson, in order to induce him to persuade the Council to put an end to their opposition against the decrees of Parliament relating to the Bull "Unigenitus."'

There is no doubt that Damiens was a fanatic, whose deed only served to show the state of mind prevalent in France at this agitated period; but in his replies he revealed the immense evil wrought by Parliament in its struggle against the authority of the Crown. Damiens' interrogation was hurried to a conclusion; some of his replies were recorded by the clerk in such a manner as to be perfectly illegible. Damiens was put under

restraint in the famous Montgomery Tower, his hands and feet clasped together with iron chains. Musketeers with loaded matchlocks kept watch over him. All idea of an organised conspiracy completely disappeared, and only he remained as a witness to the pitiful state of mind brought about by the religious disputes of the parliaments. Ideas such as Damiens indulged in may be likened to a smouldering fire, that suddenly bursts out and destroys all that lies within its reach.

As soon as she heard of the attempt upon the King's person, the Marquise de Pompadour, who owed the intelligence to the Duc de Richelieu, would at once have hurried to his Majesty's side, had she not also heard at the same time that the King had delegated his powers as Lieutenant-General of the Realm to Monseigneur le Dauphin. With his exaggerated notions of the duties of a King, and his devotion to the sacred principles of heredity,

Louis XV. had announced that as the nature of his wound was as then undetermined, and its consequences unknown, he thought it imperative on Monseigneur le Dauphin to undertake the full exercise of the authority of the Crown; the Chancellor, informed of the King's intention, called the Council together, that its members might formally recognise and sanction the authority of Monseigneur.

The Dauphin's premature accession to the throne wrought a complete change in the politics of the day, and an entirely new direction in the course of affairs was only to be expected. Madame de Pompadour's influence was shattered: Monseigneur le Dauphin, her chief antagonist, detested both her person and her policy. She looked to something even more serious than a fall from favour; exile was a possible punishment that might befall her. Thus, in a spirit of calm resignation Madame la Marquise awaited the ar-

rival of a *lettre-de-cachet.* That which caused her far more anxiety than the health of the King, to whom she had been so tenderly attached, was the thought that the edifice that had been so laboriously built up by the work of her hands was about to fall to pieces, undermined as it now would be by the ideas of the new King.

Monseigneur le Dauphin was an upright man, in every sense of the word, but a theorist and a bigot. He had always been opposed to the war, and was convinced that peace should be made immediately, no matter what its terms, in order that the people might be relieved of their miseries. Although he was, in principle, opposed to the giving of increased power to the parliaments and the Jansenists, yet he had pronounced himself for reform in the general legislation. Parliamentarians had great hopes from a change in the reigning power. When summoned to the lieutenancy of the realm, M. le

Dauphin placed his confidence entirely in the hands of two members of the King's Council — M. d'Argenson and M. de Machault, ministers who were in complete harmony with each other. They both hoped to be the means of laying the foundation of a new ministry, and, as a first pledge of their good faith, they put their signatures to the writ that sent Madame de Pompadour into retirement. It was they who presented themselves at her house, and informed her of the Dauphin's will.

The two ministers were guilty of gross ingratitude, seeing that they owed everything to the Marquise. As they were themselves of the minority in the Council, that included the most advanced spirits of the time, they could hardly say that it was from respect of ancient tradition that they reversed the policy of Madame de Pompadour, for they were innovators themselves. Their visit to the Marquise was a little too hasty and rather premature, and

they acted imprudently, for in proportion as the King grew less anxious as to the nature of his wound, he began to show signs of a return of his former pleasure in Madame's company. He even sent word that she was on no account to leave Versailles, and one of the first of his visits after his recovery was paid to her. But it was no longer love that attracted him, nor was it passion and desire that took him to her side. It seems that all illegitimate intercourse had ceased between them as long ago as the preceding year (1756). Madame de Pompadour had placed herself under the spiritual guidance of Père de Sacy, a very learned and pious father, and had publicly, at Easter, received the Sacrament in her parish church, Saint Louis de Versailles. A great deal has been said as to the accommodating way in which the Jesuits were willing to administer the Sacrament; but never on any occasion did Father Sacy consent to commit

sacrilege, nor to grant absolution to those who were guilty of adultery. A kindly man, but very strict and unbending in all matters of duty, he would never allow even one of the faithful to approach the altar unless he had shown himself thoroughly repentant and determined to lead a better life.

It appears that Queen Marie Leczinska had very deep convictions upon certain subjects, and that it was only on receipt of a solemn affirmation made by Father Sacy himself that she would consent to accept the Marquise de Pompadour as one of her ladies in waiting (1756). There was thus no necessity for self-denial on the part of the Queen, nor did the King's choice prove in any way an outrage to her dignity. Madame de Pompadour was very well received by the Queen, who was pleased to recall some old memories of the past. The Marquise, in reply to her Majesty's graciousness, said, in re-

spectful tones, with which no fault could possibly be found: 'Believe me, madame, I shall ever be most anxious to serve you to the best of my poor ability.'

Her position from that time was such as would be likely to increase her power and influence over the King; she was now no more to him than a charming woman, witty, attractive, versatile, who knew to perfection the art of holding a salon or the way in which to transact business connected with the magistracy or the Treasury without wearying his Majesty. The Marquise de Pompadour was, moreover, the representative of a policy that numbered among its adherents all true friends of France. Had M. le Dauphin succeeded his father after the attempt of the assassin, Damiens, or had he only acted as Lieutenant for a period of a few months, the Council would have voted unhesitatingly, under his influence, for peace. To obtain it, endless concessions would have had to be

made to the various powers of Europe. We are almost tempted to think that among the many plots and conspiracies hatched by the English and the Prussians might be numbered the attempt upon the life of Louis XV.

A great deal of money had been found in the pockets of Damiens, who had spoken of the generosity of the leaders of the refugees. Hostile nations often make cruel use of party hatred, and, above all, of those exiles who are at war with the authority that persecutes or keeps watch over them. It is not at all unlikely that, at this troubled period, there were men who dreamt of a complete change of policy if Louis XV. chanced, opportunely, to die. Never had the parliamentarians been more bitter or more unreasonable in their opposition. Even after the attempt on the King's life, they continued to develop their plans of blind resistance to the authority of the Crown, although they tempered their speeches

with respectful words of condolence and of regret for so unfortunate an occurrence. Twelve of the most unruly members had again to be despatched into exile, by means of the usual *lettre-de-cachet.*

In the meantime Madame de Pompadour's power steadily increased. The King again entrusted her almost entirely with the direction of affairs; the admirable skill that she displayed in carrying out her duties was amply rewarded by the confidence his Majesty placed in her. One of her first acts was the dismissal of the Marquis d'Argenson and M. de Machault, but in this she was influenced less by their futile attempt to oust her from her position of trust than by the course that affairs seemed to be taking; it was no longer possible to confide any portion of the business of the State to such men as M. d'Argenson and M. de Machault, both of whom were devoted to the Dauphin, to his principles

and theories concerning the reformation of the Government, and to the idea of the general pacification of Europe. They were quite incapable of entering into the questions of war or taxation, at that moment predominant.

The King kept the seals of the Foreign Office, and constituted an 'interim' in that department, for it was deemed necessary to discuss the more important difficulties of this critical time in a Privy Council. The influence of Madame de Pompadour continued to increase. She put her confidence in Marshal Belle-Isle, whom she liked for the boldness of his attitude during the crisis. The Comte de Saint-Florentin was entrusted with the Department of Paris—that is to say, with the disposal of the *lettres-de-cachet*: the first two countersigned by Saint-Florentin were destined for MM. de Machault and d'Argenson, one drawn up in words that might almost be termed affection-

ate, and directed to M. de Machault, the other harsh and severe, directed to M. d'Argenson. The Marquise de Pompadour, during the 'interim,' entrusted foreign affairs to M. de Rouillé, while the War Department was given to M. Paulmy, with superior powers in the hands of Marshal Belle-Isle, who was in supreme command of the entire campaign.

Led by her own chivalrous impulses, Madame de Pompadour urged on the war vigorously, and eight new marshals were appointed; the Marquis de Senneterre and Latour-Maubourg, the Comte de Lautrec, the Ducs de Biron and Luxembourg, the Comte d'Estrées, Lord Clarke and the Duc de Mirepoix. Such numerous nominations proved that the army was about to be largely increased with a view to bringing the war to a triumphant conclusion in a manner worthy of the alliance with Austria compacted in 1756. It was for this reason that the Abbé de Bernis was

recalled from Rome to take over the Department of Foreign Affairs. His arrival was calculated to give further sanction to the alliance, if such were needed. The Abbé de Bernis, with his remarkable and quite exceptional talent for diplomacy, was, of all the men of that time, the one best fitted to deal with the situation. He was the best informed of all his colleagues, and the most amiable of men. Frederick of Prussia had conceived a strong dislike for him, and Voltaire, writing under the dictation of the King of Prussia against his native country, had scoffed at the Abbé de Bernis, calling him '*Babet la Bouquetière.*' Frederick, who himself wrote verses in French, which were always inelegant and seldom free from coarseness, said of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs:

'*Évitez de Bernis la stérile abondance.*'

It was, by the way, this 'sterile abundance' that had seen through

Frederick's adventurous schemes and, in part, frustrated them. In consequence of these premonitions, the whole Council remained under the influence of Madame de Pompadour. One of her first steps was to communicate with those members of Parliament who had signified their willingness to surrender. This fraction of their number was held in great honour and respect. But the recalcitrant party remained in exile.

Until this time, men had still been in doubt as to the consequences of the resignations that had been sent in by the magistrates. The Council decided that those members who had willingly resigned their office should be henceforth considered as strangers to the magistracy. There now remained nothing but to compensate these members, and then definitely to accept their resignations. The Marquise hastened to demand the necessary funds from the financiers, and obtained them with little difficulty. The resigning

presidents and councillors were then informed that the money due to them was waiting their acceptance in the coffers of the State; in cases where it was refused, formally, in the presence of a notary, the money was, after a period of three months, distributed in charity.

In this way did Madame de Pompadour dispose of the trouble between the Crown and the Parliaments, a task of no small difficulty. The King was pleased to accept the resignations of the members and pay them their expenses in full, and the blundering mischiefmakers troubled Parliament no longer.

XI

LE PARC AUX CERFS
(1758-1760)

THE Marquise de Pompadour must certainly have gained a very great influence over the King to have suc-

ceeded in diminishing his profound repugnance for philosophers, declamatory Encyclopædists, and witty men of letters. She was, indeed, at this time at the height of her power: all the work of the State was performed in her closet; the secretaries came and submitted everything to her; even the Council itself was sometimes held there. Madame de Pompadour lay on her couch to receive all who presented themselves, rising for no one, not even princes of the blood, very often upon the pretext that she was not well; she visited no one, not even titled duchesses: there exists to this day a verse of a witty Christmas carol, written by someone at Court, in which an allusion is made to Madame de Pompadour's proud prerogatives.

The Marquise had gained her enormous influence over the King by means of a wonderful skill that enabled her to shorten and simplify the form of all questions of the day referring to the

government of the State, in order that, when submitted to the King, they might attract rather than weary him. Louis XV., ever shrewd and quick-witted, was known to allow his sympathies and antipathies to influence him in his decisions rather than cool reason. Madame de Pompadour knew how to direct these feelings, and her power lay in her successful intervention on behalf of real merit, and in the softening of those of the King's personal sentiments that were too peremptory and decisive, I might almost say too overbearing. The private life of Louis XV. and the Marquise de Pompadour has been revealed to us by a straightforward and eminently discreet witness —the naïve Madame d'Hausset, head lady's-maid to Madame la Marquise. We must be careful not to understand by this title of 'lady's-maid' a purely domestic office. Madame de Pompadour had risen to so eminent a position at Court that, in accordance with royal

and ancient traditions, she was justified in accepting the service of ladies and gentlemen belonging to titled families. Thus the Prince d'Hénin, of the family of Croï d'Havré, was her *chevalier d'honneur* (as he might have been to a royal princess), and, carrying her fan and her prayer-book, walked by the side of her chair whenever she attended divine service.

Madame d'Hausset, a woman of noble birth, might therefore be referred to as the chief of Madame de Pompadour's ladies. Honoured from the beginning to the end of her service with the Marquise's most intimate confidence, she took pains to record her experiences and observations daily. The King and his mistress would talk before her, taking no more notice of her than if she had been, as she herself says, 'a cat or a dog asleep on the hearthrug.' It was only occasionally, when a State secret had to be discussed, that the King, the Marquise,

and his ministers would pass into a private room, of which the doors would be kept locked. Louis XV. was, according to Madame d'Hausset, a man of quite exceptional personal beauty, with a charming smile. He was extremely polite to all whom he addressed. His manner when speaking was as a rule that of a rather melancholy man, who was thoroughly weary of life. Madame de Pompadour had no thought beyond that of pleasing and amusing him, and the King was never tired of murmuring (it is only women who tell us interesting details of this kind!): '*Que vous êtes bonne, excellente!*' to which the Marquise, laying her hand on the heart of her royal master, would invariably reply: '*C'est à cela que je veux parler.*' She took upon herself to do everything for him, and no demand on her kindness ever met with an ungracious reply. It is for this reason that the retailers of scandal and malignant gossip, encour-

aged by the bitter hatred of the refugees in Prussia, have gone so far as to state what seems to us so shameful that we cannot understand how the more serious writers came to repeat it, namely, that the Marquise de Pompadour owed the high favour she enjoyed to her extreme complacence with reference to the various immoralities and love affairs of the King. Historians, who certainly consider themselves to be trustworthy recorders of fact, have stated as an ignoble fact that Madame de Pompadour was the 'procuress of the Parc aux Cerfs,' whose business it was to revive in Louis XV. the taste for illicit amours which satiety had done its best to kill. Accounts of what went on in the Parc aux Cerfs multiplied with incredible rapidity under the pen of the novelist and the English and Dutch pamphleteers, who were helped in their disgraceful task by the shameful revelations made by political refugees. The chief source of these impure fic-

tions is a Life of the Marquise de Pompadour, written in French, in England, by a renegade nun, Mademoiselle Fauque, who had married a Prussian officer. It was subsequently translated into English. The legend concerning Madame de Pompadour, the procuress, has been accepted by all the historians of the eighteenth century, in much the same way as that of the balcony of the Louvre, whence Charles IX. is said to have shot down the people with an arquebus on the morning of the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, and which at that time was not in existence!

It has been the task of the present writer, with what patience he could command, carefully to sift the true from the false in this scandalous tale, and the result of his inquiries is practically contained in the question: Did there, at that time, exist a Parc aux Cerfs given up to the shameful practices that have been attributed to it?

The title, Parc aux Cerfs, is not peculiar to the eighteenth century, nor was the Parc aux Cerfs itself created specially for Versailles; in every royal forest there was a parc aux cerfs (or deer-park), just as there was a warren, a kennel for hounds, and a pheasantry: at Versailles the parc aux cerfs was situated on the Satory side, beyond the orangery, as we can see from an authentic plan of Versailles in the eighteenth century which is still in existence. Those memoir writers who place it on the other side, towards Petit Trianon, are mistaken as to the geography of the gardens. Madame de Pompadour owned a handsome residence in this part of the park of Versailles, which, later, she sold to the King; she had, besides, her 'Hôtel des Réservoirs'; but there has never been any other Parc aux Cerfs at Versailles than the vast and beautiful plain that stretched from the orangery to the outskirts of

the Forest of Satory, on the road from Versailles to Sceaux. On searching amongst the archives of the ancient town of Versailles we have found that the estate entitled the Parc aux Cerfs was detached from the general park belonging to the château and sold for building purposes, by Acts passed between the years 1725 and 1735—that is to say, long before the date of the scandalous occurrences that are said to have taken place in the Parc aux Cerfs. The Rues Saint-Antoine, Saint-Médéric, d'Anjou-Royale, Saint-Louis, and the Marché Neuf were all built on the estate. I have traversed these long, solitary roads in search of some trace of the Parc aux Cerfs, but none exists: ancient hôtels with enormous gardens form in themselves a suburb which has been part of the city from the middle of the eighteenth century.

What then becomes of the legend of the royal scandals that were carried on under cover of the Parc aux Cerfs

from 1749 to 1770? At this time there existed no such thing as a Parc aux Cerfs; its lands had already been cut up and sold for building purposes. The librarian of Versailles, who is not at all sparing of censures when Louis XV. is his subject, has, however, been obliged to confess that there are no traces of such a park remaining, and no proof that it existed later than 1735. But he goes on to say how he has, as he thinks, discovered the notorious Parc aux Cerfs of the '*chroniques scandaleuses*' in a little house in the Rue Saint-Médéric. I have visited the remains of this house and its gardens, but can find no trace of that to which the librarian refers. I have consulted those aged noblemen who, the Cross of Saint Louis on their breasts, must have had opportunities of listening to the tales of their fathers, who must have been living at this time, at Versailles and elsewhere—but with absolutely no result. History-books

and guide-books mostly contain a few stereotyped phrases on the alleged scandals committed at the Parc aux Cerfs. 'The house in the Rue Saint-Médéric,' says the librarian, 'was sold by King Louis XV. to Sieur Sevin, head war-clerk, for 40,000 francs, and the King received that sum in gold in his closet.' This remark is repeated in every guide-book of Versailles, together with the most odious slander of Louis XV. and Madame de Pompadour. What a proof! In the first place, was the house called the Parc aux Cerfs at all? There is no statement to that effect contained in the Act! Or is it so called because the King received payment for it in gold? Surely the learned librarian has made too careful a study of Louis XV. not to be aware that it was the King's usual habit to buy and sell on his own account, like any humble citizen of Paris?

There are in existence more than a score of documents connected with

buying and selling, made out personally in the name of Louis XV., and we can conclude nothing about the existence of a Parc aux Cerfs from the document that deals with the house in the Rue Saint-Médéric—certainly nothing to induce us to believe that it was the home of illicit and ignoble pleasures. Let no one imagine that the historian need be at pains to conceal or condone the secret passions and the elegant vices of Louis XV.; that the King kept many public mistresses must be admitted—and in so doing he was only following the custom of a licentious age—but the story of a Parc aux Cerfs, in the sense of the scandalmongers of the day, tolerated and even encouraged by the Marquise de Pompadour, was one of those inventions with which pamphleteers who had been bought by the enemies of France were only too ready: refugees in Holland, England, or Prussia spent their leisure in endeavouring to lessen the prestige

of their native country by publishing books full of obscene pictures.

Louis XV., in the latter part of his life, grew tired of choosing his mistresses from the daughters or wives of the great houses, and it is this that his Court, itself of such very easy morality, found it most difficult to pardon in their King. Louis had fully realised the dangers of a long line of illegitimate children, such as Henri IV. and Louis XIV. had bequeathed to their country, from the Duc de Beaufort (*le roi des halles*) down to the Duc du Maine (*le prince des intrigues*); he had reckoned up how much had been spent in hard cash on these children, and knew only too well what a drain they were on the royal treasury. But as, being a true Bourbon, he was quite incapable of controlling his burning passion for pretty women, the King preferred amours to intrigues, amours that were conducted in the strictest secrecy, and thus contrived to shelter

himself from endless demands on his good-nature, persistent requests for office or honour or mark of distinction, made on behalf of the friends and relations of the favourite. For him there was no Madame de Montespan and family; Mortemarts who were ready to take all he had to give; no Madame de Maintenon to solicit favours for the Noailles. The King would bestow a small pension on a young girl if she became a mother by him, and later a benefice on the little son, who was received into the royal household. More than one of the numerous children who bore the stamp of their royal father on their features were affectionately cared for by Mesdames les Princesses, so indulgent and so kind because they were themselves pure and holy women.

His adventure with Mademoiselle de Romans will serve to show how determined the King was not to have any legitimate children. Louis had loved

this young woman with passionate devotion; but no sooner did she cause the son born of her liaison with the King to be treated as a prince, and given precedence over his own mother, than Louis gave strict orders that the child was to be brought up in ignorance of his origin, although in all the ease and luxury that were his due. Madame de Pompadour was never weary of impressing upon the King the importance of not formally recognising his children.

But of the actual part played by the Marquise in the King's love affairs it is hardly worth while to speak. The influence that she continued to hold over him was directed rather towards his mental faculties, and it was her own exceptional and far-seeing intellect that she employed in her endeavours to spare the King anything that might prove troublesome or wearying to him. It would show a

small knowledge of the time and its manners, to say nothing of the documents of that period, to suggest that the Marquise found it necessary to resort to an unworthy rôle in order to maintain her reputation and her power over the King. Offers came from every quarter of the realm to his Majesty's *valets de chambre*, to Bontems, to Lebel, and we have, in certain autograph letters that are still in existence, a shameful proof of the eagerness of the young Frenchwoman of that period to court dishonour. What need was there for Madame de Pompadour to interfere in this nefarious commerce? It was a part eminently suited to a *valet de chambre*, but to no one else. The King was in the habit of cloaking his shortcomings in mystery in speaking of them even to the Marquise, and for proof of this we have Madame d'Hausset's memoirs. His Majesty, one day, unbosomed himself, with no small show of embarrass-

ment, to Madame de Pompadour on the subject of a young girl who was soon to become a mother, and of whom he was anxious that the greatest care should be taken. The Marquise entrusted the unfortunate young woman to the care of Madame d'Hausset, and gave her 12,000 francs to be spent upon the child and its mother; she also went out of her way to mention that the father of the child—which, by the way, was brought safely into the world—a Polish Count, had been compelled to set out on a journey. Madame d'Hausset acquitted herself zealously of her task and was amply rewarded for her pains. Louis XV. was never tired of telling the Marquise that he considered her *vraiment bonne!* and that he could not but feel genuinely grateful to her for undertaking a mission of so delicate a nature.

It is evident that, if Madame de Pompadour had been in the habit of

acting as intermediary in affairs of this kind, Madame d'Hausset would not have remarked on one more than on another. The King's half-timid expressions of gratitude would not have been expressed so warmly had the 'kindness' been habitual. It is certainly true that the King indulged in these transitory amours, and that he was sufficiently in earnest while they lasted; but 'what bourgeois,' as the advocate Barbier so pertinently asks in his memoirs, 'is without this amiable weakness?'

What we do deny, and that most emphatically, is the existence of the shameless seraglio known as the Parc aux Cerfs. The mission of the enemies of a country is ever the disparagement of the power that they are striving to overthrow: it is one of the elements of their triumph, one of the rights of war. When once the power is overthrown, everything is justified, and what was only invented to meet

the needs of a cause is then looked upon as historic fact.

Accounts have also been given of royal orgies that took place at the house of Madame de Pompadour; those charming little suppers at which the Muses and the Graces presided have been converted into veritable feasts of Nero, and the sons of the Porcherons, who often wrote the chronicles of the eighteenth century have mistaken the ante-chamber for the salon.

It may be worth while to sum up these three important facts of history, which I have described at some length: in the first place there never was such a place as the Parc aux Cerfs, or Turkish seraglio devoted to the King's secret pleasures; in the second place, the influence of the Marquise de Pompadour had nothing whatever to do with her complacency in the matter of gallant intrigue, for Louis XV. had his own special *valets de chambre* whose duty it was to superintend this

shameful traffic. Such, alas! was the condition of the morality of the country, that there were more offers than there were places vacant and that the valets themselves had ample opportunities for making a likely choice in the base petitions that poured in from all parts of the kingdom; and, in the third place, the suppers given by the Marquise were neither orgies nor scenes of gross debauchery. The intellect and the graces presided at this charming supper-table; the guests chatted gaily with one another, made mock of each other's eccentricities, sang the little songs then in fashion, chanted a Christmas carol: all that took place was done in the bright light of a thousand candle-jets: a comedy was enacted, or a short opera; and then, often, they would speak of the affairs of the moment and discuss important questions in all seriousness. At these suppers more than one resolution was arrived at, more than one decision

made, which was worthy of the distinguished gentleman who proposed it. There are pictures still in existence that show us these elegant little supper-parties at Choisy, presided over by charming women, almost hidden beneath their laces, their diamonds, their fans, in the midst of salons glittering with crystals and the lights of countless candles, hung with beautiful tapestry, furnished with inimitable furniture and adorned with the most lovely of the pictures of Watteau, Boucher and the elder Vernet.

XII

THE MISERIES OF WAR—THE EMBELLISHMENT OF PARIS—THE SALON—THE ARTISTS

(1760-1762)

THE war had been pursued with vigour, and with marked success, until the Convention of Closterseven, so

treacherously violated by the English. Their infamous breach of faith entirely altered the complexion of the campaign: the hesitation of the German Circles and the defection of the army of Saxony resulted in the unfortunate battle of Rosbach, in which the Prince de Soubise, though betrayed by the Circles, covered himself with glory: but the battle was nevertheless a disastrous one for the French. The Council recalled Marshal Richelieu, as much on account of his having signed the convention, as because Germany had complained of the way in which he had allowed his troops to pillage the land they had conquered almost at their own discretion. It was expedient at that time to listen to Germany, undermined, as that country so often was, by English money and various tempting proposals. As in all the wars with France, the English minister, fearful of invasion, was lavish of his money in every quarter

of Europe. The Whigs were prepared to make any sacrifice; they carried on intrigues at Vienna, at St Petersburg, at Munich, at Dresden, and all with a view to compromising France in the midst of her glorious campaign and leaving her isolated in an enemy's country.

At Paris, the opposition of the parliaments and the Jansenist party served the enemies of France well; caricatures and satirical rhymes on the generals, especially those who were under the protection of Madame de Pompadour, most especially of all the Prince de Soubise, were rife throughout the capital. While the armies were covering themselves with glory, the parliamentarians, lawyers, and merchants broke out into open revolt. They cried out for peace so persistently that at length Madame de Pompadour herself came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to consider the possibilities of the pacification of

Europe. M. de Bussy, a very skilful diplomatist, was despatched to London; the Duc de Choiseul sounded the States-General of the Hague with reference to the possible conditions of peace. Those imposed by England through the mouth of Pitt were so severe and disadvantageous that the King's Council were unanimous for the continuation of the war. It is indeed a melancholy fact in the annals of our country that the most ardent opponents of peace were the Protestant and Jansenist refugees at The Hague, at London, and at Berlin. Their hatred for the flag of their native land was bitter and unalterable. It was their intrigues that gave renewed impetus to the unreasoning opposition of the parliaments, which terminated in the suspension of justice throughout the realm. The King was greatly incensed; when the Marquise de Pompadour counselled a calm and moderate course, Louis XV.

cried out at a full meeting of the Council: 'It has gone on too long already; I am no longer young—we must put an end to it.' The Marquise still hoped that some arrangement might be made, whereby, at this crisis, the King might gain the support of the parliaments.

King Louis himself, at this period, became more active and energetic; he held a review of the Swiss Guards and those of his own household, who thereupon went forth to battle fired with fresh and unwonted ardour. In the contemporary engravings, executed with great skill and in minute detail, are to be found many interesting souvenirs of this review, which took place at the Trou d'Enfer, near Marly, and on the plain of Sablons, in the presence of the King and all his family. And what a splendid array it was! What noble qualities were hidden beneath those gay uniforms: musketeers, gendarmes, mounted infantry, grenadiers, all were

represented. After the King had passed them in review, the troops left for Flanders or Germany, full of renewed ardour for the welfare of their country. The Marquise was present at every one of these military fêtes: there were so many carriages filled with sightseers eager to catch a glimpse of the display that while the first one was passing through the Porte Saint-Honoré, the last had not yet left Versailles. The nobles showed no disloyalty towards the cause, but hastened to make every sacrifice in their power to further it, and their enthusiasm gradually communicated itself to the soldiers.

When the King was not occupied with business connected with the Council or the war, his favourite recreation was hunting. Any form of exercise that served to allay his anxiety concerning the state of his kingdom was welcomed by the King. He used to travel quickly from Compiègne to Fontainebleau and thence through the

Forest of Senart to Rambouillet. Here and there, in the midst of these vast forests, he erected hunting-boxes wherever he considered it convenient, commodious resting-places where he was in the habit of taking supper, and occasionally sleeping. In one of these lodges, hidden among the mighty trees of the forest, he would take counsel. Solitude inspired him and his counsellors, and, just as in olden times the forests, peopled with nymphs and satyrs, breathed forth the oracles, so, now, there emanated from their depths decisions and resolutions of grave importance. Seated by a crackling fire, with the autumn wind whistling about the house, the King loved to listen to the advice of his favourites, or to their accounts of the notable incidents of the campaign and the brave doings of his men.

This was a very difficult time for Madame de Pompadour, and she was compelled to put forth all her skill in

order to preserve the influence she had in happier times succeeded in gaining over her royal master. The King had not placed himself at the head of his army, as in 1745. It was necessary to leave nothing untried that might distract his weary spirit and in some measure relieve the melancholy that destroyed any pleasure he might otherwise have found in life. The Marquise was not long in realising the necessity of inventing attractive occupation of one kind or another. Louis had a natural fondness for building, and took a delight in encouraging travel and the discoveries of science. To this was added, through the Marquise's own enthusiasm for painting, a love of art. Madame de Pompadour was, in this, ably seconded by her brother, the youthful Marquis de Marigny. The King was very fond of this modest young man, whom he first created Marquis de Vandières, promoting him to the *cordon bleu*, and who later, as Marquis de Marigny, won the King's

confidence completely by the activity and resource he displayed in beautifying the town of Paris. Whenever a crisis occurred in public affairs, the suspension of industrial activity rendered it necessary for the State to find some means of occupying the people. Hence the erection of noble monuments, necessitating the employment of thousands of workmen. Rome only became the mighty city that it was because of those Emperors who had the welfare of their citizens at heart; the Cæsars built a new Rome in order to provide scope for the activities of the populace. During the Seven Years' War a number of great works were completed in Paris, because the people were deprived of all other means of livelihood by the suspension of commerce with foreign nations. The plans made by the Marquise de Pompadour and her brother for the improvement of Paris are still in existence; indeed, the splendid build-

ings of the Place Louis XV., the bridge and the Palais Bourbon, and the Madeleine, bear striking witness to the ambitious character of their endeavours. It was their intention to complete the Louvre by extending it to the Tuileries. We see from an engraving that the Marquis de Marigny used to preside over the works in person, carefully supervising every detail, however trifling. The architects specially favoured by the Marquise were Soufflot, Gabriel, and Servandoni, all admirable exponents of their art, to whom we owe the Panthéon, the Place Louis XV., and the Hôtels des Champs-Elysées and Saint-Sulpice. Examples of the art of Greece and Rome were effectively mingled with those of the refined and delicate style of the eighteenth century, with wonderful skill and with very satisfactory results.

It was to the boulevards that Madame de Pompadour preferred to give most of her time and attention.

She planted them with trees as far as the Porte Saint-Martin: and to her, too, do we owe the majority of the noble mansions of the Rue Bergère. But after the completion of the Panthéon, Saint-Sulpice and the Madeleine, she included in her plans that part of the capital which we call '*la cité de* Paris.' Old Paris was to be sold in its entirety to a company of financiers, who pledged themselves to undertake the proposed alterations. A new town was to spring up, with Notre Dame at one end of it and the Palais de Justice at the other. The two banks of the Seine were to be connected by bridges built in the form of covered-in galleries, decorated with flowering shrubs—a sort of hanging garden, in fact. The Palais-Royal was to be joined to the Luxembourg by a winter-garden, in which the inhabitants might shelter themselves from the wind, the sun, and the rain. The Pavillon de Hanovre stood as a model for count-

less hôtels and mansions, each of which was in itself an *objet d'art*; painters and sculptors worked for years on the ceilings and the decorations above the doors and on the walls of the salons, just as Vernet had done, when he painted his pictures of Morning, Mid-day, and Evening above the doors at Choisy.

It is to the Marquise and her young brother that we owe the development of the School of Rome and the institution of *grands prix* for painting and architecture. Cardinal de Bernis obtained for the pupils privileges and immunities which otherwise they could only have enjoyed if the school had been founded on French soil. To the Marquise also is due the first exhibition of pictures in the Louvre, which took place in the year 1758, at a time when Madame's power was at its height. It was an event of great importance for artists. Conspicuous among the exhibits were works from the hand of

Vanloo, Boucher, Greuze, Vernet, and Vien. A report was made upon this salon by all the critics, of which the most noticeable, perhaps, was that by Diderot. The family of artists bearing the name of Vanloo was a remarkably brilliant one. It came originally from Flanders, but had for some time been settled in Nice and Aix-en-Province. Jean-Baptiste Vanloo had become famous by a series of portraits: Louis XV. as a child, Marie Leczinska, Madame de Sabran (a Provençale like himself), and Madame de Prie were all portrayed by him. His brother, Charles-André, the friend of the Duc de Bourbon, was famous for a remarkable picture entitled '*Apollon qui écorche le satyre Marsyas.*' It was a masterly piece of work, which bore witness to a careful study of the cameos of the ancients, in which the Marquise took so great an interest. Two later pictures of his had made so great an impression on Madame

de Pompadour that she commissioned him to do a portrait of the King, which was exhibited in the salon of 1763.

Vanloo was lodged in the Louvre, and enjoyed an annual pension of 6000 francs; he continued to be Madame's favourite painter until the exhibition of his '*Trois Grâces enchainèes par l'Amour*,' about which the Marquise was very severe indeed. '*Cela des graces!*' she was heard to exclaim, to the artist's extreme mortification, as she looked on his buxom full-figured Flemish maidens. Her ideal of beauty was that of the ancient Greeks, an elegant form of slender grace, and she could not refrain from exclaiming at this manifest result of a study of the art of Rubens.

The first salon of 1758 made a considerable stir because it took place at a time when everyone was devoted to the arts and when many a life of leisure was spent in cultivating them; the artist of the eighteenth century was received

everywhere with open arms. Madame de Pompadour was herself an artist of distinction. The Marquis de Marigny was not only the patron of all things intellectual, but himself a working artist. Greuze, Vernet, and Vien have all depicted his features on their canvas; he was not slender and graceful, like his sister, but his eyes were clear and bright, and he had a fine high forehead; he was able to correct a certain prominence below the waist (was he not of a family of financiers?) by a graceful poise, and the jacket of black velvet that he wore made the size of his waist appear less than it really was. It will be long before artists forget their noble patron, whom Louis XV. himself was pleased to honour with the *cordon bleu*. Vernet's sea pictures were all dedicated to him; there is a square in the Champs-Elysées (the work of Madame de Pompadour), which bears the name Marigny, in memory of him who was so successful in carrying

out the views of his more talented sister. Alas! there does not exist in all ungrateful Paris a single monument to the Marquise de Pompadour! At Bellevue, at Versailles, at Meudon, at Étioles, we tread lawns arranged by her, we traverse walks set out by her hand, and are lost in admiration for all the loveliness which was collected in these places by her industry alone—and all that the coarse historians of our annals can do is to call her 'la Pompadour,' after the manner of all courtesans, and consider that they have, by so doing, pronounced judgment on her and on all that we owe to her benign influence and encouraging patronage.

XIII

MADAME DE POMPADOUR'S ALLIANCE WITH PARLIAMENT—THE EXPULSION OF THE JESUITS

(1760-1763)

DESIRE for popularity is one of the most common causes of a fall from power, and often the origin of deplorable injustice. The war was at its height, and sacrifices to meet its demands were being made on all hands. The King's Council, directed by the Marquise de Pompadour, was already making the way clear for a complete reconciliation with its enemies at home. A great concession was about to be made to the parliamentarians and the Jansenists, in the shape of the abolition of the Order of the Jesuits, to the destruction of whom Madame de Pompadour had contributed so much.

It was a time of very serious finan-

cial embarrassment, and expedients of all kinds had to be resorted to. It was many years since the question of the abolition of the monasteries had been mooted, and men were beginning to ask themselves whether the State had not the right to suppress the monastic orders, and avail herself of the wealth and property thus obtained? This idea had been favoured by M. d'Argenson's ministry, long before the philosophic party took it up; it came from Lutheran and Calvinist governments, from England and from Prussia — countries that had profited largely already by unjust confiscation at the time of the abolition of the religious orders. Voltaire, despatched on a secret mission to Berlin in 1743, brought back the following report of a conversation with King Frederick:—'In a final interview with his Majesty of Prussia, I spoke to him of a pamphlet that had been published and circulated in Holland for about six weeks, in which it was proposed to

bring peace to the Empire by secularising all ecclesiastical principalities in favour of the Emperor and the Queen of Hungary; I told him that I wished success to the project with all my heart; that it would be rendering unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's; that the Church should have no other duty than that of praying God and the princes of the blood; that religious bodies had not been instituted to act as sovereigns. I added further that my opinions had made me many enemies among the clergy.'

This plan of abolishing the monasteries fell in entirely with the ideas of the King of Prussia, who looked upon it as a starting-point in the campaign of philosophy against religion: 'I have noticed,' he writes in 1763, 'and others say the same, that the countries that contain the largest number of monks are just those in which the people are most addicted to blind and ignorant superstition. There is very little doubt

that, were these refuges of fanaticism destroyed, the people would become enlightened. The monasteries should be pulled down, or at least reduced in number. The moment has now come in which this can be done, for the governments of France and Austria are crippled with debts, and, the resources of industry having been used up, there is no longer any hope of being able to meet liabilities; the bait offered by the rich monasteries and convents is a tempting one. But, it may be said, what is to be done as regards the bishops? I reply that their time has not yet come. We must begin with those who kindle the sparks of fanaticism in the hearts of the people. As soon as the fire has died down, bishops will become mere insignificant nobodies, of whom sovereigns can dispose as they think fit.'

Frederick was anxious to break the strength of the religious orders. It is surely a melancholy thing to

find the sovereign of a mighty kingdom thus expressing himself against religion, without which no power is legitimate. But what is more especially noticeable is his idea that the religious orders were an obstacle to the development of the doctrines of philosophy. The monks formed a democracy in the Church: the friars mixed with the people and formed a popular body that invariably led the way in all charitable works; the mendicant orders of Saint Anthony and Saint Francis were at the head of this band of helpers. Men liked to associate themselves with their labours, and Voltaire himself had not disdained the title of Temporal Father of the Capuchin Friars of Gex.

Economists of the new school held that, when the State was in difficulties, it had a right to lay hands on the wealth of the clergy. At this period of the war the difficulties were considerable, and M. de Machault proposed that

a sale should be made of a certain number of the better cultivated estates of the realm belonging to the Church. Madame de Pompadour could not fail to look with favour on a measure that would add so materially to the resources of the State. It was at this time that the Jesuits were spoken of to the Marquise, and their status discussed. The Jansenists were certainly not in the majority, but they formed one of those active and powerful minorities that, either by force or by intrigue, sooner or later attain their end. Parliament was Jansenist in form and Jansenist in principle, and in the matter of the refusal of the sacraments had pronounced itself, in no undecided terms, in favour of the harsh and unbending policy of the Sorbonne and the University. In the Parliament of Paris there were even to be found violent anti-Jesuits, such as the Abbé Pucelle and Abbé Chauvelin, a man of very mean and despicable character. It would have

been difficult to find a more ugly man than Chauvelin, with his limp and his sour face; and he was little liked by his colleagues. Chauvelin and Pucelle, both very popular among the bourgeoisie, who were almost entirely Jansenist, were continually on the lookout for an occasion upon which to pronounce themselves definitely against the Jesuits. They knew only too well that, in the history of all great corporations, there are always some errors committed, accidents favourable to an enemy, which will serve as a pretext for the annihilation of the corporate body.

The Jesuits as a body had some sterling qualities; they had also many weaknesses and many faults. There existed among them a true spirit of government, but, on the other hand, their bold opinions were distinctly in advance of those of the century. Thus, in the colonies, in Spain, Portugal, and even in France, the Jesuits were at the head of all great enterprises, whether

in connection with industry, commerce, or public education. In the East and West Indies and in North and South America, their great genius was displayed in a manner always brilliant, but sometimes overbold and even audacious. As a result, there were frequent mistakes, retrogression, as it were, as well as marked success, and the affair of Father Lavalette gave their enemies an excellent opportunity to convict them of the error of their methods.

It was with great delight that the opportunity was seized. The Jesuits were denounced by the parliaments and the University at one and the same time, and the attack only increased the popularity of the Jansenists. Speeches were made in Parliament that sounded for all the world like philosophical treatises; the Encyclopædists positively trembled with joy and eagerness, not because their hatred of the Jesuits was especially bitter, but

because they saw in this attack the beginning of a vast project of destruction, and that now the abolition of the monasteries was inevitable and the wish expressed by Frederick of Prussia to his guests at supper at Potsdam and Sans-Souci about to be fulfilled. The parliaments took advantage of the effect produced by the savage attack that had recently been made upon the Jesuits at Lisbon, which ended in the total abolition of that order in Spain. Abbé Chauvelin became a popular favourite. His portrait was in every shop window and artists vied with one another in softening the extreme ugliness of his features. The lines

'Que fragile est ton sort, société perverse
Un boiteux [Saint-Ignatius] t'a fondée,
un bossu [Chauvelin] te renverse.'

were in everybody's mouth.

In face of this determined action on the part of the magistracy, it was practically impossible for the Marquise

de Pompadour and the Duc de Choiseul to advise the King to veto a decision to which they in their own minds were not really averse. The Duke and the Marquise, bound as they were to the philosophic party, had a secret leaning towards the abolition, or at any rate the reform, of the religious orders. Considering the state of affairs at that time, a quarrel with Parliament would have been extremely imprudent: the Jansenist party promised assistance, in the shape of money, if, in return for their aid, they were accorded the direction of the University and granted permission to effect the expulsion of the Jesuits. The Marquise de Pompadour and the Duc de Choiseul agreed to give this permission, and the famous edict, that expelled the Jesuits from France, and expropriated them from their college and their churches, followed, on the 6th of August 1702. The edict met with violent, but futile, opposition from the bishops, who were

all unanimous in their high opinion of the Society of Jesus. Parliament became from this time amenable to the wishes of the King, and generous in voting the money he so badly needed.

The Marquise de Pompadour grew extremely popular: there is no surer way of winning the favour of the populace than by doing what the party in the ascendency suggests, even if it be in itself an evil course. Expediency makes many a hero. Had the Marquise de Pompadour bestowed a new province on France, she could not have met with more praise and applause than she did on the occasion of this edict, which signed the death warrant of a society devoted to Catholic interests; she was likened to the heroine who saved France from the English: Agnes Sorel had driven the English from the land, and now Madame de Pompadour drove out the Jesuits; the two were compared, and men seemed no longer mindful of the fact that, whereas the one had acted

under the influence of noble sentiments alone, the other had been but the instrument of a party. The Duc de Choiseul shared her ill-gained popularity: he became the man of the moment. There was a great similarity between Madame de Pompadour and the Duke, a man of ready wit and considerable ability, who condescended to make a joke of everything, no matter how serious. He was a great admirer of the versatile genius of the Marquise, and thought very highly of her verses on the reform of the army, in which she compared his policy to her own in the matter of the annihilation of the Jesuits. She was intoxicated by the praise lavished upon her and became blind to the true aspect of affairs, failing completely to see how greatly public education would suffer after the destruction of the Jesuits. It now passed into the hands of the philosophers, who were no doubt very learned, but who had been trained on the prin-

ciples of the Romans and the Spartans rather than on monarchic or French principles. Madame de Pompadour little thought that in these schools would be fostered the energetic spirit of Democracy and Republicanism, destined in the end to work the downfall of the famous Bourbon dynasty.

XIV

THE PEACE OF EUROPE

(1762-1763)

THE terms of peace that had been drawn up by the Council at Versailles, notwithstanding their moderate and even generous character, had been rejected by Pitt, the implacable enemy of the system of the growth and preponderance of French influence as Louis XIV. had conceived it. I have already described the base part played in this rejection by the Calvinist

refugees. The immediate outcome of the refusal of the terms of peace was a great outburst of patriotism all over the country. The King, the Council, and Madame de Pompadour made sacrifices wherever it was possible to do so, and town corporations and magistrates vied with one another in voting funds for the equipment of fresh troops and the manning of additional battleships. The honour of their country's flag was at stake.

M. de Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour became at this period very closely united, and the identity of their views helped materially in the development of their policy. One of the results of their union, which attracted the attention of the whole of Europe, and was looked upon as a fitting complement to the alliance with Austria, was the famous treaty called the 'Family Pact,' in which all the Bourbon sovereigns bound themselves by a perpetual offensive and defensive

alliance. Louis XV. thus became the head of a 'single family of harmonious states,' which included France and Spain, the two Sicilies, Parma, and Piacenza.

No treaty ever made a more profound impression upon Europe, and especially upon England; the English Government was not slow to grasp the full significance of such an alliance. The two great sea powers of France and Spain could join together in an attack upon the Indies and America: from Dunkirk to Naples there stretched 700 miles of coast land. It seemed practically certain that England would demand the surrender of many of the French possessions in India and America, but, in the opinion of M. de Choiseul, those concessions would be of no account if he succeeded in bringing to a successful issue a very elaborate project which had its origin in the brain of a young native of Provence—a bold, adventurous spirit, who found

great favour in the eyes of Madame de Pompadour. This youth, by name Dumouriez, who was, at the age of twenty, already a 'Chevalier de Saint-Louis,' had, in an interview with Marshal Belle-Isle, boldly expressed it as his opinion that India could easily be snatched from the hands of the English by the help of the native Mussulman race, the only one, to his mind, that could make any show of vigorous action. As for the colonies of North America, they were themselves moving towards emancipation.

Side by side with his project of winning India for the French was another, which had for its aim the ascendency of the French flag in the Mediterranean. It seemed most unlikely that, when peace was finally made, France would be able to keep possession of the island of Minorca; she would have to restore it to Spain. The Council at Versailles, therefore, cast eyes on the island of Corsica, which had been yielded to

France by the republic of Genoa in return for timely help which Louis had accorded to the Italian State. The island, much harassed by party factions, was in part occupied by French troops, at first under the command of M. de Chauvelin, and later of M. de Marbeuf, a young officer belonging to a family of financiers much attached to Madame de Pompadour. Marbeuf, like all Madame de Pompadour's favourites, was the possessor of an elegant and shapely figure and great charm of manner, which in itself alone was calculated to bring about the moral conquest of Corsica. In his letters to the Marquise he gives us an enthusiastic and graphic description of his friendship for a young noble of the name of Charles de Buonaparte, whom he wishes especially to recommend to the notice of the King of France. Corsica is represented by him as already weary of her experiment in the absurd constitution which had been drawn up

for her by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and only too willing to bow to the sceptre of Louis XV. and thus assure his Majesty of ascendency in the Mediterranean.

In the Channel, and on the ocean generally, the want had long been felt of a sheltered roadstead which might be used equally well as a starting-point and a harbour of refuge. The Battle of the Hague, in the reign of Louis XIV., had been lost for this very reason; and the flotilla got together on so lavish a scale by Marshal Belle-Isle had been of very little use because he had no place of shelter for his ships in time of tempest, nor fortified harbour from which to repulse the squadrons of the enemy. It was the Council of Louis XV. that discussed the building of the port of Cherbourg, and the young officer Dumouriez had orders to draw up the plans and submit them to his patroness, Madame de Pompadour. General Dumouriez had

a very great respect for the Marquise; in fact all who ever had public or private dealings with Madame de Pompadour never failed to speak in high terms of her sagacity, and all had great admiration for her patriotic forethought and the various plans she devised and carried out for the good of her country.

The causes that contributed to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War and the compulsory peace of 1763 cannot, in justice, be put down to the Marquise de Pompadour. Hostilities were offered on sea by the English, and by King Frederick in Germany, without pretext or warning; France was compelled to defend herself, by making alliances and preparing armaments. The war was conducted in a very businesslike manner, and, like all wars, was accompanied by reverses, as well as successes: the alliances were well concerted, and so arranged that France was enabled to arrive at a perfect

understanding with Austria, Russia, Sweden, and the German Circles. The Seven Years' War was crowned by the Family Pact, one of the most famous ideas ever conceived in the eighteenth century, which struck at the heart of the rising power of the English, and was a thorn in their flesh as long after as the year 1815.

The peace of 1763 was brought about by various general causes, most of which I have already indicated. In the first place English gold, scattered lavishly throughout Europe, estranged first Russia and then the German Circles from France, and nearly succeeded in estranging Sweden; in the next place, the opposition of the French parliaments, and their unwillingness to vote the money necessary for the proper development of the war, was a sad hindrance to France at this time of her exhausted treasury; and, finally, the calumnies spread by the minions of Frederick of Prussia undermined

the spirit of patriotism in France. The alliance of 1756 was attacked on all sides; King Louis XV. was made the object of the most odious slanders; pamphlets were published and circulated by the refugees, in which Madame de Pompadour was accused of carrying off little children, of bringing famine upon the people by the monopoly on corn, and of selling herself to the Empress of Austria for the price of a few words of flattery.

Next to England, Madame de Pompadour's most bitter enemy was Frederick, King of Prussia. Sovereigns who are extremely bold on the field of battle, very vultures in conquest, who only look to results without troubling to examine the means, seldom pay much attention to women, unless it be to gratify some caprice in the manner of barbarians. It is not surprising that the King of Prussia failed to appreciate the elegance and perfect grace of Madame la Marquise. It was, moreover,

when under the influence of Madame de Pompadour that France instituted her policy of making alliances. The great fault men had to find with the Seven Years' War was this, that they could not understand for what reason it was begun, unless it were to destroy the work of Richelieu, who had always held out a friendly hand to Prussia, with a view to undermining the power of the House of Austria. Those who make this reproach are surely ignorant of that axiom in diplomacy which states that no alliance can ever be permanent, and that 'time and the hour' work a change in every situation. The rivalry of the two houses of Austria and Bourbon had been succeeded by the closest alliance, for the reason that the power most to be dreaded by France at the moment was England, and England was becoming more and more friendly towards Prussia. The policy was carried further, so far in fact that alliances were formed with Russia,

with Sweden, and with Germany. But if Madame de Pompadour upheld the policy, it was M. de Choiseul who carried it in the Council, and we are constrained to wonder why Madame de Pompadour was attacked, and not the real author of the alliance of 1756. Perhaps an explanation may be found in the fact that M. de Choiseul was the instrument of the philosophic party, and for this reason was respected, and even flattered, by those who were in bitter enmity with Madame de Pompadour.

The treaty of 1763, between France and England, which was signed by the Duc de Nivernais and the Duke of Bedford on the 23rd of February, was no more than a temporary truce, which would have of necessity to end in the parties again having recourse to arms. There were, in this treaty, the germs of the emancipation of the English colonies and the origin of the war of 1778. Henceforward the Duc de

Choiseul occupied himself solely with increasing the importance and efficiency of the French Navy, and with introducing order into the government of Corsica. The colonial policy of France was pursued with renewed energy, with the result that lawsuits were instituted against certain functionaries in Canada, who had become hopelessly corrupt. The outcome of this was the restoration of something like seventeen millions to the Treasury. Another result was the criminal prosecution of the Comte de Lally. It is worthy of notice that at this time Madame de Pompadour used every means in her power to prevent the Comte de Lally from being brought before Parliament; especially anxious was she to save him from capital punishment. Violent measures seldom appealed to the Marquise. As long as she lived she held firmly to her resolution not to allow too much authority to Parliament in matters of life and death.

Public opinion in England was no better satisfied with the treaty of 1763 than public opinion in France; some of the clauses of the treaty were looked upon by the Opposition in Parliament as little less than treason. In France, in spite of the need for peace and the feelings of relief to which it gave rise, the people were wounded in their dignity by certain offensive clauses imposed upon them by the arrogance of their rivals. The pamphleteers accused Madame de Pompadour, whilst they did their best to shield the Duc de Nivernais and the Duc de Choiseul, both of whom were popular with the philosophers. The French envoys at London, The Hague, and Berlin had orders to buy up and destroy these pamphlets. A thriving trade was done in calumny in those days. When a refugee found himself without means of subsistence, he had only to concoct a book of scandal, or a pamphlet full of hatred and lies. Then he would

offer it to the French embassy of the country, wherein he had taken refuge, for a considerable sum of money, or, in some cases even, for a pension. The bargain would be concluded and the book forthwith suppressed. And yet it is from productions of this kind that most of the descriptions of the events of the eighteenth century have been culled, and facts in the lives of its principal men ascertained! Thus is history written! Thus is the younger generation instructed in the annals of its ancestors!

XV

MADAME DE POMPADOUR'S AMUSEMENTS —THE 'PETITE COUR' OF LOUIS XV.

(1762-1763)

In all the vicissitudes of the war, in its chances, its anxieties, and its reverses, one of the greatest of Madame de Pom-

padour's self-imposed tasks was that of distracting the King, lifting the weight of his own thoughts from his mind and relieving him from the monotony of his own weary spirit.

In company with his Majesty, the Marquise visited his various country villas—Bellevue, les Réservoirs, the Château de Bel-Air, the Marquisat de Ménars, and his estate at Crécy en Brie. This was the most brilliant period in her career, and to so great an extent did she indulge her artistic love of beauty and of luxury that we learn, from a statement of her accounts, that her knick-knacks alone were valued at 394,000 francs, her wardrobe at 350,000, her old Chinese lacquer at 111,945 francs, and her old china, exclusive of the famous Sèvres china, at 150,000 francs. Her love of art and her generosity towards artists induced her to expend nearly 3,000,000 francs on the decoration of Bellevue alone. Men have inveighed against the

extravagance of the Marquise; but did not her expenditure bear fruit in the works of painters and sculptors? Surely it was a very gracious way of distributing largess to the great company of artists by whom she was surrounded!

In each of her villas or hunting lodges the Marquise held her court; at Choisy, her favourite residence, the King was in the habit of receiving his own personal friends and the various men of genius who had been brought specially to his notice. The Marquise had need of all her powers of persuasion to induce the King to welcome philosophers or Encyclopædists, but in the case of travellers and naturalists, scientific investigators, chemists, and mathematicians, it was an easier matter to obtain an introduction to the Court. Madame de Pompadour, knowing the attraction such men had for the King, would receive them with open arms, and it was entirely owing to her influence that the naturalist, George-

Louis Leclerc, obtained his title of Comte de Buffon, his splendid lodging in the Jardin des Plantes, and the publication of his Natural History. Madame de Pompadour chose as her physician one of the members of the new school, Quesnay, who enjoyed her full confidence, as well as that of the King, as long as the Marquise remained in favour. Quesnay was a rather curious mixture of learning and charlatanism; but he had made a serious study of the science of practical medicine, and thoroughly understood the temperament and constitution of the King and his mistress. Madame de Pompadour confided many secrets to his ear, and the physician enjoyed considerable influence. He took advantage of his position to propagate his own ideas and bring his friends into favour, notably the Comte de Mirabeau (*l'ami des hommes*), Roubaud, and Gournay, a writer of some prolixity. The school of the Economists, always

a hot-bed of charlatanism, had attacked the King on his weak side, and exploited his penchant for the country and the well-being of the peasant classes; they talked of nothing but the improvement of the condition of the labourers, published the first of the '*Maisons Rustiques*,' and various journals and pamphlets, and thereby won for themselves places of high favour with the King and Madame de Pompadour. Thus, for example, a young man of the name of Turgot, of whom both Quesnay and Madame de Pompadour thought very highly,—a great advocate of reform, but, withal, very stubborn and dogmatic,—after having set countless numbers of labourers to work and to die on the marshes of French Guiana, received, during a period of twenty-eight months, at Paris, no less a sum than 100,000 francs a year as governor of a colony that he had never even deigned to visit. This youthful theorist, the friend of d'Holbach, Voltaire,

and d'Alembert, became for a time very popular. It may be mentioned that the man was an elder brother of the more famous Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot.

It would be wrong to assert that Quesnay's intentions were not for the most part honourable, or to deny that he was a very learned man and a distinguished analyst. Madame de Pompadour designed a coat-of-arms for him, as she had for the Comte de Buffon, consisting of three pansy-flowers with the device: '*Propter cogitationem mentis*'; but a man of a party, however honourable in himself, often serves as a shield to the host of intriguing conspirators who swarm round him, and eventually win him over to their side by assiduous flattery. Quesnay was the patron of a crowd of pseudo-scientists who babbled incessantly of the relative values of gold and silver, of free trade and socialism. And, what was more, he was a link connecting the King to

the philosophic party, and in this respect of great assistance to Madame de Pompadour: Diderot and d'Alembert had both succeeded in gaining the entry of Choisy, in spite of the fact that they were personally repugnant to his Majesty. Dull and pedantic, they were sadly out of place in the charming company of exquisites that formed the Court of Louis XV.

Rousseau owed his presentation to the King through his famous *Devin de Village.* This lively little opera had been produced at Fontainebleau, and Louis XV. himself used to sing the popular airs, '*Non, Colette, n'est point trompeuse* and '*C'est un enfant,*' very much out of tune! It has been asserted that Rousseau proudly refused to accept favours at the hand of Madame de Pompadour, but this was not the case; a curious letter of his is still in existence, addressed to the Marquise de Pompadour, on receipt of fifty louis sent by her at the request of the King

'PARIS, *March 7th*, 1763.

'MADAME, in accepting the gift which you have been so good as to forward to me, I bear witness, I trust, to the respect I feel for the hand that offers it, and I venture to add that the honour you have paid to my humble efforts puts my modesty to the test, and ingratitude is not the most dangerous pitfall I have to avoid. I am your respectful and humble servant, 'J.-J. ROUSSEAU.'

All the tales of Rousseau's contempt for the proffered kindnesses of Madame de Pompadour fall to the ground in the face of such autobiographical evidence as this. It was not long before the Marquise rendered him a still greater service.

Political bodies do not always fully realise the exact significance of their deeds, with the result that they sometimes contrive to abuse the power entrusted to them. When the parlia-

ments concurred in their harsh action against the Jesuits, they failed to foresee its inevitable effect on public education; the road was left open for the triumphal progress of lay instruction and educational experiments, and the last blow was struck at religion. The Advocate-General Le Chalotais, a lifelong enemy of the famous institution of Saint-Ignatius, had himself published a treatise on education, in which he propounded a very advanced theory, which left no place in the rearing of the young for God or the divine principles of religion. But his work was easily outdistanced by Rousseau's tedious child of nature, his Émile, who clambered up trees and chattered to the beasts, himself little better than a brute.

On reading the 'Émile,' Parliament was seized with a fit of righteous indignation: without recognising the serious mistake they had themselves been guilty of, they hastened to give

evidence of their own faith in religion and their respect for tradition; but the evidence came too late. By an Act of the Parliament of Paris, 'Émile' was condemned to be burnt by the public executioner, and a writ of arrest was issued against Jean-Jacques Rousseau; he was warned in time by the Marquise de Pompadour and, fortunately for himself, escaped the hand of justice. She herself provided him with a safe retreat. With her usual kindness, the Marquise told the King that it was impossible to condemn to the four walls of a prison the author of that charming play *Le Devin de Village*, which had so often soothed his Majesty in his hours of leisure.

Madame de Pompadour was not so successful in her petitions on behalf of Voltaire, although the Duc de Choiseul seconded her in her solicitations. The philosopher of Ferney, to say nothing of the fat and vulgar Madame Denis, to whom Swiss mountains appealed

very little, was weary of his exile, and sent petition after petition to his friends at Paris begging them to allow Ovid to return to his native country. Both in verse and in prose did Voltaire compose humble appeals and flattering epistles, addressing them to the Duc de Choiseul, the Marquise, and the Duc de Richelieu. But the King was adamant, either because Voltaire's repeated attacks upon religion offended his Majesty, or because the poet had forfeited his right to be treated as a French subject by placing himself at the service of the King of Prussia during the Seven Years' War. It was Voltaire who had read and touched up the most outspoken of Frederick's pamphlets against France and her allies. Louis XV., with his accustomed good sense, once said to the Marquise: 'Let your poets remain poets, and not meddle with affairs of State: are not Crébillon, Gentil Bernard, Collardeau, and even your little friend Marmontel, all charm-

ing enough, with their *contes*, their *chansons* and their comedies?'

The King always preferred the society of a few intimate friends to that of a crowd of courtiers: only a very small number of guests was ever admitted within the walls of Choisy: the Prince de Soubise, the Marquis de Chauvelin, the Duc de Richelieu, d'Ayen, and the titled ladies of whom I have already spoken; one or two amusing *raconteurs*, among whom the Marquise singled out the celebrated Comte de Saint-Germain for special favour, were all who were honoured by invitations to the King's famous supper-parties. This Saint-Germain is not the whimsical and novelty-loving minister who so completely undermined the discipline of the French army in the reign of Louis XVI., but the learned mystic who maintained that his soul had lived throughout all the ages in the bodies of every celebrated person known to the world's history. The people of a sceptical age

are always ready to give credence to the words of any who are bold enough confidently to prophesy the future and predict the fate of nations by the horoscope. Never is belief in the supernatural entirely absent from society; in spite of ourselves we believe in spirits, and in angels and devils, as powerful intermediaries between God and man.

The origin of the Comte de Saint-Germain was itself a mystery—a circumstance that added weight to his utterances. He was said by some to be the son of a Portuguese Jew who had, when in the service of some high power, journeyed in both the East and the West Indies. Others even went so far as to say that the Comte de Saint-Germain had found the much-coveted philosopher's stone of the Middle Ages, or the secret of making gold and precious stones out of dust and ashes. But, whatever his origin, there was no doubt as to the fascination of his con-

versation and the attractiveness of the tales he told so brilliantly. He owned a very fine collection of engraved stones and pictures of the Flemish school, a fact that rendered him especially interesting to the Marquise de Pompadour; he was introduced to her by Marshal Belle-Isle, of the renowned family of Fouquet.

A mystic always finds favour in the eyes of women, because they are so much more impressionable than the sterner sex, their hopes higher and their fears greater: and the Marquise de Pompadour was indeed a typical woman, ever anxious concerning the sentiments of the King towards her, ever plumbing the depths of his love for her. She was in the habit of consulting the Comte de Saint-Germain, if not as a magician who owned a magic ring, at anyrate as a man of superior intelligence, who, by his close study of mankind, and of the events connected with the life of mankind, was able to

presage the future. She presented him to the King with her usual graciousness.

Louis XV. was himself far too religious ever to accept the fantastic utterances of a mystic without careful investigation. He admitted the Comte to Choisy because he found the adventurer's sparkling conversation pleasant and distracting. The King listened with considerable interest to Saint-Germain's accounts of his travels through Asia and Africa, and his charming anecdotes about the courts of Russia and Austria, and about the Sultans, which M. de Saint-Germain told with great spirit. The Count seemed better informed on small matters connected with each court than the King's ambassadors themselves. An experienced traveller, he expressed himself in a manner at once picturesque, bold and impressive. 'To preserve one's respect for humanity, sire,' said he one day, 'a man should be neither a confessor, nor a minister, nor a police-officer. . . .'

'Comte,' said Louis, interrupting him, 'you should add, nor a King. . . .'
'And do you know why, sire? Did your Majesty notice the thick fog that hung over Paris yesterday? The fog that rises up round false friends and ministers is a thicker fog than that.'

Saint-Germain had at this time got together a very fine collection of pictures of the Spanish school; it was he who first drew attention to their worth and beauty. He presented the King with two lovely paintings of Velasquez and Murillo. He would frequently bring with him to Choisy little boxes, exquisitely decorated, full of precious stones, and present them to the Marquise. Madame d'Hausset tells us that he distributed his charming gifts with a liberal hand, and that she herself had received a box of considerable value. The Marquise de Pompadour and the King used to amuse themselves at supper by listening to the marvellous tales of M. de Saint-Germain. In

the eighteenth century, supper took precedence over every other meal. According to the accounts kept by Madame de Pompadour, she was in the habit of spending 500,000 francs a year on her table, in which expenditure we imagine was included the suppers given to the King and his guests. They were certainly exquisite little suppers, which included new dishes such as *croquettes de faisans aux truffes* and *quenelles de saumon aux crevettes*, as well as the more usual *poulardes du Mans farcies à la Périgord*, *carpes au vin du Rhin* and *jambons trempés de Madère*. The King was never served with more than one wine, either champagne, carefully iced, or, when slightly indisposed, *vin de Volnay* or *vin de Clos-Vougeot*; *Bordeaux*, which Marshal Richelieu had brought into fashion, was, on the advice of Quesnay, excluded from the King's supper-table, as being an indigestible wine. Nor must we forget to mention the brilliant talk that flowed

round the table—an accompaniment to the elegant dishes and the sparkling wine—the talk of men of leisure for whom, after their labours on the field of battle, there now remained only the art of love, and who, in their cultivation of this art, left in their wake a long trail of sweet-scented flowers, emblems of their gallantry.

And yet these men knew well how to serve their country, to die for her if need be; they could increase her boundaries by the conquest of fresh lands, and enrich her with the fruits of their discoveries; men of polish and refinement, gallant where women were concerned, veritable Wandering Jews —a striking contrast to serious men of business, who are never free from anxiety, always at work; who spend their lives in thinking of their safes; slaves bowed down by the burden of their riches.

XVI

THE SUFFERINGS OF MADAME DE POMPADOUR—HER WILL—HER ILLNESS AND DEATH

(1760-1766)

HER endeavours to maintain her high position cost Madame de Pompadour untold pain, trouble, and anxiety: she lost first her health, and later her life, in the struggle. Though still a young woman she was already ailing, and threatened with exhaustion: the cruel epigrams of a mocking minister, M. de Maurepas, told of a weakness which the Marquise strove in vain to combat. It was at this period that she experienced the greatest sorrow of her life. Her beautiful little daughter, Alexandrine, her child by M. d'Étioles, died suddenly, in her eleventh year, at the convent where she was being educated with the greatest possible care.

Great hopes had been set on the future of this young girl. Marshal Richelieu may go out of his way to tell us, with his usual spitefulness, that he had refused Madame de Pompadour's request that the Duc de Fronsac might become the husband of her child. It is doubtful whether anyone will place faith in his statement, for Mademoiselle Alexandrine was already promised to the young Duc de Pecquigny, son of the Duc de Chaulnes, of the family of Luynes. The marriage was destined to take place in a short time, when Death laid his cold hand upon the little maid. Her mother was for a time inconsolable. The child was, by Madame's order, buried in the grounds of the convent, for whose inmates the Marquise had a most profound veneration. Their order, a model of self-denial and self-abasement, was one created entirely for the people, a sublime democracy unharassed by ideas

of property or possessions. Madame de Pompadour had always taken a special interest in these nuns, and had enlarged their little gardens, which lay at the back of the Château of Bellevue, in which they cultivated their carrots and their haricots; she would often visit them in their cells, and had even expressed a wish that she might herself be buried in their church. As she felt her days drawing to a close, her eyes were more and more often turned towards the little cross on her daughter's grave, surmounted with the pure white flower of maidenhood.

The proposed alliance of Mademoiselle d'Étioles with the Duc de Pecquigny was important in that it brought Madame de Pompadour into closer relations with the Queen, to whom the Duchesse de Luynes had long been maid of honour. It was through the latter that negotiations between the Queen and the Marquise were carried on. I have discovered two very curi-

ous autograph letters in the course of my investigations; one is from Madame de Luynes to the Marquise de Pompadour, whom she addresses in most affectionate terms:

'Madame, the Queen bids me say that she has no fault to find with you, and that she is fully sensible of the pains you have always been at to please her; she has even expressed a wish that I should acquaint you with the fact, and it is with pleasure that I undertake to carry out her command, being well aware, as I am, madame, of the sincerity of your sentiments, and having myself, if you will permit me to say so, a love for your person.

'DUCHESSE DE LUYNES.'

Madame de Pompadour hastens to reply to this kind and gracious letter:

'Your kindness has given me new life, madame, for I have for the past

three days been enduring most grievous bodily pain; I have been vilely slandered before Monsieur le Dauphin and Madame la Dauphine, but they have been so good as to allow me to prove the falseness of the calumny. I was told that the Queen had also been turned against me. You can well imagine my despair, I, who would gladly lay down my life to serve her. It is certain that the kinder she is to me, the more will green-eyed jealousy busy itself with blackening my poor character. You may trust me, madame, I assure you.

'MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR.'

A short time after her daughter's death, when still in the prime of life, and when her loveliness was at its best, Madame de Pompadour made her first will and testament. The deed gave evidence of a calm and serious nature, in strong contrast to that of the fêtes, the pleasures, and the comedies of

Choisy, as well as to a strength of mind exceptional in a young woman of her character. The same hand that had trailed garlands of flowers, and arranged bows of many-coloured ribbons, now penned the solemn terms of her final bequest.

'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost: this is the last will and testament of Jeanne Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour, formerly the wife of Charles Lenormand d'Étioles, but now separated from him. I commend my soul to God and pray that He may have pity upon me and on my sins, hoping that His wrath may be appeased by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

'I desire that my body be interred with the nuns of the Place Vendôme, at Paris, in the tomb I have myself chosen, and that the burial shall be performed without pomp or ceremony.

'I humbly ask that the King will graciously accept the gift of my hôtel

at Paris; I wish that it may be ultimately left to M. le Comte de Provence. I also beg the King to accept my engraved stones, by Leguay, seven of my bracelets, my rings and other trinkets, to be added to his own collection of precious stones. I name as my heir my brother, the Marquis de Marigny.

'I appoint as my executor the Prince de Soubise; however harassing the mission entrusted to him may prove, he must look upon it as evidence of the great confidence with which his honourable character inspires me: for himself, I beg of him to accept two rings, one containing my large diamond, and the other an emerald engraved by Leguay to represent Friendship; I venture to hope that he will never dispose of them; they may serve to remind him of one who, duriug her lifetime, had for him the greatest respect and friendship. Given at Choisy, November 17th, 1757.'

When the Marquise de Pompadour

wrote these grave and touching lines she was not thirty-five years of age. The Prince de Soubise tells us that the Marquise handed her testament to him one evening, after a supper at which the King had been present, and at which she herself had outshone the other guests in the brilliancy of her beauty.

As she became older she was obliged to devote more time and attention to her dress, in order to conceal the inevitable ravages of time: it was she who invented those innumerable little 'nothings,' that go to the adornment of a Court beauty; she who devised the charming toilettes that still bear her name. Furniture, mirrors, tapestry were all made 'à la Pompadour.' An eminent artist herself, she spent her days in gathering round her the most beautiful productions of all schools; she had that essential characteristic of a true artist, the power of adjusting varying elements to the requirements of a harmonious whole.

It was at this final period of her life that Madame de Pompadour completed her collection of *objets d'art.* She owned the most beautiful and the finest engraved stones, both ancient and modern, that were in existence. She herself superintended the production of the works of certain of the poets, the printing and binding of which were remarkably beautiful. These fine impressions, with all their wonderful ornamentation, are still known under the name of the Pompadour Edition; as much as 150 francs a volume has been paid for the books. Towards the end of her life the Marquise developed a taste for the monuments of the ancients, Greek manuscripts and Egyptian papyri. She founded an Eastern Chair in the 'Bibliothèque du Roi,' and supervised the completion of 'The Arabian Nights.' It was by her orders, too, that Anquetil du Perron began on the Zendavesta, the sacred book of

the Persians. Every Wednesday the keepers of the manuscripts in the royal library were received by the Marquise at Choisy with marks of special favour, so that she might be kept informed of any fresh acquisitions in the interests of science.

But in the meantime the health of the Marquise became worse and worse, and she redoubled her efforts to conceal her condition from the King. She was of that heroic nature that seeks to keep from those they love anything likely to sadden them or disturb their peace of mind. By the month of March, 1764, her state had become alarming; she was obliged to unburden herself to her friend, the Prince de Soubise, and call in the *curé* of her parish church. On the 13th of April she had hardly strength enough left to dictate a codicil to her will, the last words she uttered to the world.

'It is my wish to bequeath to the undermentioned, to help them to re-

member the woman who loved them: the portrait of my poor little daughter, who is dead, to Madame du Roure; my watch set with diamonds, and a box with portraits of the King, to Madame de Mirepoix; a box bejewelled with diamonds to Madame de Grammont; a diamond ring to M. de Choiseul; a ring with an engraved stone, to represent Friendship, to M. de Soubise: for the twenty years that I have known him, it has been his portrait, and mine. This codicil has been written at my dictation, by Colet, and I have not strength enough even to sign it.'

Not for a single day did the Marquise forget the noble Prince de Soubise.

At length, then, do we find her on a bed of sickness, to which she has been brought all too soon, this woman once so entrancingly beautiful, the lovely huntress of the Forest of Senart, the queen of artists; journeying whither we all sooner or later must journey: to the grave. Calm and serene in the

midst of all her sufferings, she was inspired by one sentiment alone, that of friendship. It is the sentiment she had had for the King, and the sentiment which she had so fondly hoped to inspire in him. To the last moments of her life she preserved this sentiment in her soul, which had been purged of all others. The evening before she died she summoned the *curé* of the parish church (the parish already bore the name of La Madeleine) to attend her, and, later, as he was taking leave of her, she said to him: 'Wait a little, Monsieur le Curé, we will go together.' And shortly after she had uttered these calm words she expired.

She was forty-two on the day of her death, which took place on the 15th of April 1764, and twenty years of her life had been spent by the King's side, at Versailles and elsewhere. In order to cast a slur on his Majesty's feelings, it was said that Louis displayed marked indifference at the death of his dear

friend. It is true that the body of the Marquise was laid to earth, without ceremony, in the graveyard chosen by herself, and that the King, profoundly selfish as he must therefore have been, never came to see her in her last illness, and did not even spare a tear when she was gone.

In the first place the Marquise de Pompadour herself, in her will, had expressly asked that she might be buried like a poor person, without pomp or ceremony—that is to say, carried to her grave by the nuns. Before she died she had arrayed herself in a dress of fustian, with the heavy rosary of the Order of Saint-Francis round her waist, and on her breast a wooden cross; and it was thus that she was interred, according to her own express wish, in a vault of the Convent of the Place Vendôme.

Who can claim to have seen so deeply into the heart of the King as to be able to assert that he saw her pass out

of his life with calm indifference? Louis XV. did not share the opinions about death that were common at the time; as a Christian philosopher, he could contemplate it without loss of colour: his heart was hardened by the experiences of his life, and he derived a certain amount of pleasure in conjuring up sombre images of the Great Unknown; as a true Catholic, he believed in the resurrection of the body, and the life eternal; death was not to him the cruel fate that it was to the atheist. It is to-day, after the lapse of so many years, easier to pass an impartial judgment.

Such was the Marquise de Pompadour, and such the eminent artist who left behind her so many and such splendid witnesses to her love for all that was ennobling and inspiring. Her enthusiasm for serious study was remarkable, and she had a wonderful power of judgment in affairs of State.

Besides the portrait in pastel by

Latour, now in the Louvre, which is a little uncertain as to colour—as are all pastels—there are in existence many other portraits of the Marquise. One of the most remarkable is a medallion by Leguay, surrounded with clusters of roses which are held up by lovely little Cupids. The portrait of the Marquise painted by Boucher in 1760 (now at Versailles) was not a success, nor, indeed, can it be said that Cochin's engraving, at the foot of which Marmontel inscribed one of his most charming verses, succeeded any better in portraying the charm and vivacity of her features.

The two qualities which the Marquise de Pompadour undoubtedly possessed were great kindness of heart and unfailing constancy in friendship; it was these that had won the heart of Louis XV.

There were several other pictures of the Marquise, notably that by Carle Vanloo, which was painted for the

Château of Bellevue, and is absurdly ornate. In it Madame de Pompadour is represented as a stout woman, with a particularly fat face. A far more graceful picture is that on a medallion, designed by Gueverdo and painted by Nattier shortly after the death of the Marquise. The head is surrounded with cyprus leaves, and Loves and Graces are seen extinguishing their torches and weeping for her whom the tomb had so recently engulfed.

Side by side with the praises—which may have been partly flattery—that lived after her, we hear of most atrocious calumnies of the dead woman. I cannot bring myself to repeat the infamous similes, the base epigrams, the vile accounts of Madame's manner of life, which Maurepas has collected from the songs and pamphlets of the day. This was a time of idleness, and slander flourished; men were fed on epigram, nourished on ill-natured jests. Hatred of existing authority took the

form of scurrilous couplets, and death, so far from putting an end to hatred and spite, only served to increase it, by removing the fears which the living presence had inspired. In the progress of time, history has come to accept the extravagant judgments pronounced by bitter enemies, and to consider itself justified, nay, authorised, to make use of the epithet 'la Pompadour,' as though this woman, of so noble a character, were no better than a courtesan.

One would have expected to find that so eminent an artist, who had played so important a part in the public affairs of her time, would have left a number of letters behind her, and yet there is nothing more rare than genuine autograph letters of the Marquise de Pompadour. There are a few to be found here and there among the collections of Noailles and of Maurepas, which have been deposited in the public libraries; they are, as a rule, of little

interest, and written in an affected and unnatural style. Madame de Pompadour had never mastered the art of writing; she repeats her phrases far too often. As the Marquise felt things deeply, she was always afraid lest others should not feel them as deeply as she, and consequently returned again and again to the charge, as though she were endeavouring to engrave her words on the mind. Several collections of letters, purporting to be those of the Marquise de Pompadour, were published anonymously. They were printed twice: in London in 1765, and in Paris in 1767. These ingenious letters were at first attributed to the facile pen of the younger Crébillon, a habitual guest at Choisy; but they were, later on, assigned to their real author, the Marquis de Marbois, at that time an attaché to the embassy in London, later the Governor of Saint Domingo. They were witty letters, written in a

light vein, which would never have been attributed to the stately old Marquis de Marbois had it not been proved beyond doubt that he was their author. In them he echoed the character and sentiment of Madame de Pompadour with wonderful skill, and displayed her as she really was—enthusiastic over our victories, sorrowful at our defeats, loyal and sincere towards all that was noble and great. The letters afford us conclusive proof that none doubted the kindliness of Madame de Pompadour; none questioned the genuineness of her feelings. M. de Marbois shows this the more clearly in that he published his letters after her death—when he could no longer hope to gain anything by his act. The Marquise was not in any sense of the word literary—one of those women who live again in their letters and little friendly notes; the fact is, she was a bad letter-writer. M. de Marbois, a young man of twenty-

six at the time of the publication of his book, secretary to M. de Castries and tutor to his children, must have formed a perfectly true estimate of both the intellectual and the emotional qualities of Madame de Pompadour, but he wisely refrained from publishing her letters, insignificant and trivial as they were.

The Marquise de Pompadour was an artist, and an artist only. It is true that she had a liking for literature, and was on many occasions its generous patroness, but she had none of the attributes of a true woman of letters. If she surrounded herself with a splendid library, it was more to satisfy her innate love of collecting than from love of books. After her death, in 1764, the brothers d'Hérissaut published a volume bearing the title: 'Catalogue of the Books belonging to the Library of the Marquise de Pompadour, Lady-in-waiting to the Queen.' It is compiled with great care and accuracy, and

contains particulars of 3826 volumes. Books on theology and philosophy form a very large part of the collection; schoolmen and mystics are placed side by side with metaphysicians; affairs of the Church were always of great interest to the Marquise; in her day the Bull 'Unigenitus' occupied the thoughts of everyone. In her choice of books Madame de Pompadour also displayed a taste for political economy, commerce, and the wealth of nations; more than a hundred and fifty are devoted to these subjects in the catalogue.

Her liking for literature of a lighter and more frivolous nature is shown in a very curious collection of plays, and a collection of operas and ballets, arranged in order, up to and including those of her own day. History was well represented, and Madame de Pompadour was also the proud possessor of a very rare set of epic poems on Charlemagne and Roncevaux and the Round Table; they formed her favourite reading.

The sale of Madame de Pompadour's library lasted for more than six months, during which time the splendid collection was scattered among private individuals eager to possess such beautiful treasures, and the monasteries of Saint-Geneviève, Saint-Germain-des-Près, and l'Auxerrois. Some, together with the *objets d'arts* mentioned in her will, went to her brother, the Marquis de Marigny.

M. de Marigny died in 1781, and a public sale was held of his collection, the catalogue of which is no less interesting than that of Madame de Pompadour's library. The authentic editions of the catalogue contain, as a frontispiece, a portrait of M. de Marigny, as well as 146 reproductions of paintings of the Flemish, Venetian, French, and Spanish schools, as well as original pictures, and pieces of sculpture, and many engravings, sixty of which came from the hand of Madame de Pompadour herself.

It is by the study of the many different aspects of the life of the Marquise de Pompadour that I have endeavoured to form a picture of the historic figure that is so closely connected with twenty years of the reign of Louis XV. Hitherto she has been judged by slander and by gossip; artists alone have understood her, loved, and respected her—instinctively, one might almost say. But we men of letters, encased in the armour of our own austere virtues, have crushed her with the thunderbolts of our haughty disdain. Those who have nothing to say against the Revolution, and who can quite understand how 7000 *assignats* were spent in effecting it, find it difficult to forgive Madame de Pompadour for having expended some few millions in *objets d'art*, or in generous gifts to needy artists.

Let us bow our heads before the great historians who cry down La Pompadour: it may be that, after all,

they are right. And yet our former epochs had their glory: there is about them a peculiar charm, that will never fade—a charm that resembles that of a Christmas carol, heard on a frosty night, or of a lovely group of nymphs by Coustou, in which we must confess we see more to admire than in those black statues of rebellious slaves who, sword in hand, threaten the patricians of Rome, and even seem to be shaking a fist at those who laud and exalt them!

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